Only a Girl's Heart

Winnie Bayliss
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ONLY A GIRL'S HEART.

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CHAPTER I.

HADDON'S FERRY.

IT was a dark, sultry night in midsummer. A thunder-storm was gathering over the most gloomy and terrific pass in the Alleghanies. It was where the Hurry and the Whirl, two mountain torrents, that gathering volume and force from the waters of innumerable streams, as they rush downward, and drawing nearer together, unite and form the Wilde River, that, rending its way through the stupendous precipices, opens the gorge known as "Haddon's Ferry."

The country all around was divided into plantations, owned by wealthy proprietors whose ownership dated back to the time of the first settlement of the county in the reign of James I., and whose fertile acres were cultivated by negro slaves. Haddon's Ferry had been in possession of the Haddon family from a time beyond which the history and traditions of the neighbourhood went not. The ferry-house was a substantial cottage, under the shadow of the precipice; its back-yard ran from the rear of the house to the foot of the mountain; its garden from the front of the house to the banks of the river.

On the beach beneath were built two strong boat-houses—the one on the right as you faced the river was the receptacle for the flat-boat, used to carry carriages, horses, and cattle across the water; and the other for the row-boats and sail-boats kept for passengers.

Between the boat-houses a pier ran from the river to

the edge of the channel. On the land-end of this pier a gate opened into the garden and led up a gravel walk, bordered by shrubbery, to the front door of the cottage. This door opened on a passage, flanked by two doors on each side, leading into low-ceiled rooms with old-time fire-places, and wide, low windows. At the back of this passage was a door leading into the yard, and giving a view of the rocky side of the precipice. This was considered the unsafe side of the premises; for not unfrequently a depredatory fox would enter the yard on a foraging expedition among the hen-roosts, or a wolf or catamount would lie in wait for larger prey. To protect human creatures as well as poultry, a pair of bull-dogs were chained there during the day, and let loose at night. Branching off from the right-hand side of the pier as you faced the land, was a rugged road that ran among the ravines of the mountain, leading to "Hill Top," the largest plantation on this side of the ferry. It was watered by the Hurry, the north branch of the Wilde. On the left hand of the pier ran another road around the mountain to the red sandstone church, situated on the Whirl or south branch of the Wilde. The household of Haddon's Ferry, on the stormy evening of that fatal fifteenth of July, with which the first act of our drama opens, consisted of the proprietor, his granddaughter, and negro housekeeper.

Gabriel Haddon, the owner of Haddon's Ferry, and last of a line of hard-working hereditary ferry-men, was a handsome, noble-looking man, sixty years of age. His form was tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, straight-limbed, and stately, with cleanly-chiselled Grecian features, a complexion as transparent, and eyes as clear as those of childhood, and long, silvery-white hair and beard that framed in the fine old face and flowed down over the chest and shoulders.

Those who had known Gabriel Haddon from his early youth whispered how, in one week of agony, by the black magic of sorrow, the golden locks of the young man had been turned to silver.

A self-educated man, of the highest moral and intellectual excellence, Gabriel Haddon was loved and admired by his neighbours. Various opinions were held of him. Some considered him a philosopher, others

believed him to be a prophet, while a third class set him down as a mild lunatic. Such was Gabriel Haddon on this fifteenth of July, the day he completed his sixtieth year. The greatest blessing of the ferry-man's life was his granddaughter, Gertrude, a girl of fifteen.

Gertrude Haddon possessed a face and form which, once seen, could never be forgotten. I will endeavour to describe her, though so much of her beauty came from the informing spirit within, that no material description would do justice to the subject.

First, she possessed a form of medium height, and slender, well-rounded proportions; a small head that sat gracefully on a well-turned neck, and was covered with brown hair that rippled from her forehead and temples, and fell in shining curls down her shoulders; a regular and classical profile; a broad massive forehead; dark eyebrows, black eyelashes; dark, brown eyes, full of compassion and humility; a straight nose; a sweetly-moulded mouth, with a short upper lip; a round, dimpled chin.

What words can portray Gertrude's intellectual beauty, the spiritual loveliness of her countenance? Its ineffable tenderness? Its perfect meekness? Her dress in summer was cheap pink or blue gingham, with white neckerchief and apron for weekdays; and for Sundays white cambric or muslin, with pink or blue ribbons; in winter blue or crimson merino, with black silk apron and white neck-ruffles for weekdays; and blue or black silk suits, with white linen cuffs and collars for Sundays. The old ferry-man was determined to dress his child nicely, though no jewellery, lace or embroidery, or artificial flower, ever marred the simplicity of the maiden's toilet. She was strong, healthy, and fearless. She was skilful with a needle, a broom, or an oar. In the sickness of their negro housekeeper she could do all the work of the house. In the absence of her grandfather she could manage the ferry-boat.

The third inmate of the ferry-boat was Jessie Bell, a tall, black, bony and angular negro woman, of fabulous age and strength, who was housekeeper, cook, laundress, maid, messenger, and factotum to the family.

On this stormy midsummer evening the three persons

comprising the household were assembled in the sitting-room. An old-fashioned mahogany table with folding leaves, a lounge with a flowered chintz cover, an easy-chair to match, half-a-dozen cane-bottomed chairs, and a work-stand, completed the furniture. The fire-place was filled with cedar boughs, that emitted a pleasant odour. On each end of the mantel-shelf stood brass candlesticks; above it hung three fine engravings of Bible subjects; on the left-hand side was a picture of the Nativity; on the centre, one of the Crucifixion, and on the right hand, the Ascension. Tea was just over, and Aunt Jess was hovering about the table, piling up cups, saucers, and plates on the tray, preparatory to taking them into the back kitchen. The silver-haired patriarch had withdrawn to his easy-chair. His granddaughter was standing by his side. Both were looking out on the blackening sky and darkening river.

"Clear the table as quick as you can, Jessie, for I think there is a storm rising, and we will need to be quiet until it is over. Hurry, my good woman," said the ferry-man.

"Oh! yes. Hurry, and smash up all the cups and sassers! 'Wilful haste makes woful wastes!' You hear me good, don't you?" grumbled Jess.

Gertrude began to assist Jess in the removal of the service. With the help of the young girl the table was soon cleared, and the room restored to order. Before retiring to her dominion, Jessie Bell turned to the master of the house and said:

"Ole Marse, I'm a gwine to step up to prayer-meeting at ole Aunt Letty Brown's to-night, and I reckon I shall stay all night and come home airly in the morning, time enough to get breakfas' if you's no injections."

"I have no objections on my own score, Jessie; yet, on your own account, I should advise you not to venture out to-night," replied the old ferry-man, adding: "There is a heavy storm rising, and you may be caught in it before you reach your destination."

"'Perdestination!' Yes, I know that means what will be won't be, or something. Can't help it, ole Marse! Storm or no storm, dis chile's bound to go to pray'-meeting dis night. And 'what can't be endured must be cured.' So no use talking, ole Marse."

"Very well, Jessie, I will not talk. Use your own free agency," good-humouredly replied the ferry-man.

"Good-night, ole Marse; good-night, Miss Truda; say good-night now, 'cause taint no use for me to come back in de parlour 'fore I goes," were the final words of the old woman, as she disappeared.

"The storm seems to be going around, after all, grandpapa. The clouds are drifting north of Mount Wilde, and melting down the horizon," observed Gertrude.

"It may be so, True. The threatening clouds may pass harmlessly away, or they may go around and return some hours hence, and burst upon us with redoubled fury. One can never tell what the clouds are going to do in these mountainous regions and at this season of the year."

"Then why did you let Jess. go out, dear Grand.?"

"Grand." was the fond abbreviation she often used in speaking to him.

"Because I would not constrain her to stay in against her will. A wise man has written that 'the sweetest word in the language, next to love, is liberty.' I would not constrain the liberty of any one, least of all, that of a dependent."

"Why, you never would, Grand. I need not have asked the question. And now you and I will spend a cozy evening together," said Gertrude, affectionately.

"And I am not unwilling to be alone with you, to-night, my True. I wished to speak to you in private, safe from the least interruption, that I might reveal to you an important secret, Gertrude," said Gabriel Haddon.

"A secret, grandpa!" exclaimed the child; a flash of lightning blazed into the room, lighting up the patriarch's head and face with a glory brighter than its own, and illumining the beautiful face of the girl. The lightning was followed by a peal of thunder that reverberated through the mountain, and died in the distance.

"The storm is coming around, as I thought it might. Come from that open window, my child, and take the candle off the table, and set it out of the draft to keep it from being blown out," said the ferry-man, as he arose from his seat to close the shutters.

Gertrude took the lighted candle and set it on a stand in the corner of the room, and then she drew her grandfather's easy chair to the table, and a chair for herself beside it.

The old man having fastened the window-shutters, sat with his granddaughter. She looked up to his face with mute inquiry. She did not repeat her question.

"Yes, my little True," he said. "I have a secret to tell you—one that you must have known sooner or later—one that you ought to have been told before this, and that you shall hear now! And yet!"

Gabriel Haddon sighed. Gertrude gazed at him in mute expectancy.

"First tell me, my dear, do you know what day this is?" gravely inquired the old man.

"Yes, dear grandpa, it is your birthday, and also mine. Had you forgotten it?" asked the girl.

"No, my dear; I had not forgotten it. I am sixty years old to-day, Gertrude. How old are you?"

"Why, fifteen, dear grandpa, don't you remember?" she inquired, with some uneasiness.

"Yes, my child, I remember perfectly, you are fifteen years old and some days besides," he added, thoughtfully.

"Dear grandpa; what do you mean? You talk so strangely! Are you not well?" inquired Gertrude, anxiously.

"I am very well, my little True, and know too well what I am talking about," sighed the patriarch.

"Then what do you mean, dear Grand., by saying that on this, my birthday, I am fifteen years and some days old? If this be my birthday I *cannot* be fifteen years and *some days* old. Or if I *am* fifteen years and some days old *this* cannot be my birthday! How can it, grandpa?"

"My child, I do not know the date on which you entered this world, but I count your life from that day, fifteen years ago, when, a new-born babe of a few days old, you came into my care. It happened on my forty-fifth birthday," said the old man, gravely.

"Then—I am not—your granddaughter, after all!"

"No, my dear little True, you are not my granddaughter—after the flesh," replied Gabriel Haddon.

"Whose—whose—child—am—" she began, in faltering tones; but her voice broke down.

"You *are* my child after the spirit, my little True. I have never had a child but you. You have been all the world to me. You have never known any parent but me. I have been all the world to you. We have been all in all to each other, and we will continue to be so. Come, dry your eyes, look up and smile. Do you not wish to know how you came into my charge?" inquired her grandfather.

Gertrude bowed her head; she could scarcely trust herself to speak.

"Listen, my child. Gertrude, by some strange coincidence of chance or fate, every important crisis of my life has come on the fifteenth day of July and at the regular intervals of fifteen years. The last event in my existence occurred fifteen years ago this night, when I found you in a cradle among the water-lilies, like another Moses in the bulrushes. Fifteen years have passed since then and brought you to womanhood and me to another great, critical night of my life. I feel that crisis approaching," said the patriarch.

Gertrude raised her beautiful face from her hands, and gazed upon the speaker—her arched eyebrows, her dark, dilated eyes and lips slightly apart, all expressing the intensity of wonder.

"No," said Gabriel Haddon, answering that look. "I cannot explain *how* I know these things. I do not understand the operations of my mind, far less the mysteries of my spirit. I do not even know whether the approaching crisis will bring good or evil. I only feel that it is coming, and know that it will surely come."

"It is all very strange," murmured Gertrude.

"Everything is strange, or—nothing is. But as I perceive this crisis coming, and know not how it will go, I am constrained to tell you the story of *my* life and the secret of yours. Draw your chair closer to mine, and listen."

Gertrude moved as directed, but the patriarch had not time to open his lips before a flash of lightning blazed into the room, followed by a tremendous roll of thunder and a deluge of rain. Scarcely had the last echo of the thunder passed away before the clatter of horses' hoofs

were heard galloping towards the house. The old man and the girl paused to listen to a sound so unusual at that hour.

"Who can that be coming here at this time of night and in such weather?" inquired the ferry-man.

"It surely cannot be any one who wishes to cross the ferry," answered the young girl.

"Yet what else would bring a horseman here?"

"But you could not put him across, grandpa?"

"Not in this tempest—no, it would be madness to attempt to do so. But here he is, whatever he wants," added the patriarch, as the horseman clattered to the gate and jumped with a "thud" to the ground.

Gabriel Haddon opened the door, admitting the visitor—a tall, intensely black old negro, buttoned up in a drab riding-coat, and wearing black trousers, with their ends tucked into high-topped boots.

"Evenin', marster. Dreadful weather, sar," said the negro, taking off his black felt hat.

"Why, is this you, Saturn? What could have brought you out on such a stormy night?" inquired Mr. Haddon, as he closed the door and placed a chair for the man.

"Yes, it's me, Marse Gabe; and nuffin', 'less it was a case o' life and deaff, could a fotch me out, as you may judge, sar."

"But sit down while you explain your business. You must have had a battering ride down the mountain-pass through this tempest," said the ferry-man.

"True for you, marster. I did have a hard fight wid de ellerments to keep my seat on one horse, and lead t'other down the pass 'dout breaking all our bones; but bress de Lor', here we is, safe at last, and thanking, marster, I will sit down," said Saturn, sinking into the chair.

"Now, tell me your errand, Saturn," said the ferry-man, resuming his own seat in his elbow-chair. At that moment a flash of lightning lit up the room, and a peal of thunder shook the house.

"Merciful Lord in Heaven!" exclaimed the appalled negro, "that any sinful soul should have to take its flight on sich an awful night as this!"

"Now, then, tell me your message. If it be one of

life and death, you should lose no time in delivering it," said the ferry-man, as soon as silence was restored.

"Well, sar; it's ole Marse Gen'l Slaughter, sar, and werry suddint, though it might a been expected," said the negro.

The fair face of the old ferry-man grew dark as the night.

"And what of General Slaughter?" he demanded.

"Well, you see, sar, his hour have come, as might be looked for; 'cause he's a werry ageable ole gemman, is the ole marster, sar; ober ninety odd year ole, sar. But he was as well as you or me, sar, in health, he was, till yes'day mornin', when he hev himself into a passion long or de tax-collector and went right off inter a fit, or a faint, or a somefin. We put him to bed, and I fotch two doctors, as has been with him—one or t'other has ever since. But laws, sar, he never come to hisself 'till dis arternoon, and de doctor says as how it's ony for deaff, and tole him so too. And so ole Marse Gen'al, he sent me off through de storm to ax you please to come to see him for the Lord sake, immediate, as how he has got somefin to say to you before he die, which de doctors say he can't possible live through the night."

Darker and sterner grew the face of the ferry-man.

"Has Hiram Slaughter sent for me at last, after thirty years of wrong unconfessed?" he muttered to himself.

"Marse Gen'al prays you for to lose no time in coming, sar, but come at once. He have sent a saddled horse for you, and says how he would a writ a note on'y he can't hold a pen," continued the negro.

For a few moments the ferry-man's face seemed the field of warring passions; but at length his countenance cleared; he bowed his silvered head and murmured:

"I will go."

Gertrude, who had been an attentive listener to the conversation, now came around the table to her grandfather's side, and said with earnest expostulation:

"Dear grandpa! what! on a night like this do not think of doing such a thing. It would endanger your precious life."

"My little True," said the ferry-man, gazing into her wistful dark-brown eyes, "my little True, mine enemy

lies on his death-bed, mine enemy no longer, and has sent for me. I must go to him."

"Through lightning and thunder and rain, dear Grand?"

"Through fire, if necessary, my child; but the only care I have is the leaving you at home alone to-night."

"Oh, dear Grand, don't think of me. I shall not mind being alone at all, since you must leave me."

"No? You are a brave little girl, and there is nothing to hurt you. Now bring me my long boots, dear."

Gertrude brought the boots, great-coat, hat and gloves, and laid them all on the table, except the boots, which she placed on the floor at her grandfather's feet. The ferry-man soon got ready. Then he took his hat and gloves, and said:

"It is now ten o'clock, my dear. It will take me half an hour to reach Hill Top Hall, half an hour to receive General Slaughter's last wishes, and half an hour to return. So I shall try to be back by half-past eleven, or if there should be any delay, twelve at latest. But don't sit up for me, love. I'll take the duplicate key and let myself in. Good-night until I see you again." He kissed her brow, took the umbrella she offered him, and went into the storm, followed by his negro guide.

She was obliged to shut the door quickly after him to keep out the wind and rain. She turned the key and resumed her seat by the table—listening. Presently she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs as they galloped away, and then she prayed for the safety of her grandfather. Her grandfather? Ah! but he was not her grandfather, she remembered, as soon as she had finished her prayer; he was no kindred to her; but did she love him less since she had discovered that fact?

Oh, no! she loved him more than ever; and she was sure he loved her utterly. The bond between them was one of perfect love, not to be broken by death, when death should come to one of them. So the revelation being over, and time for reflection being given, the girl was reconciled. But if not the ferry-man's granddaughter, who was she? Who were her parents? Why had she been placed, a babe, in a floating cradle, and left, like Moses in the bulrushes, only more forsaken,

since no one watched to see if she should be saved? She could not answer these questions even by inference. She turned from them to one nearer and more vital. Why had the dying General Slaughter sent for Gabriel Haddon to come to his bedside?

General Slaughter had been the life-long enemy of Gabriel Haddon, she knew, but the cause of the enmity she knew not. Had not the Ferry been the inalienable freehold of the ferry-man, General Slaughter would have hunted Gabriel Haddon from the neighbourhood thirty years before. And to the Christian ferry-man, who only wished to live in peace and charity with all mankind, this enmity, with its aggravations and insults, was the greatest trial of his life.

This message might mean nothing more than the dying sinner's wish to make reparation to an injured neighbour; or it might mean matters of more importance. The girl's mind was so occupied by these questions that she found no opportunity to think of the loneliness of her position in the ferry-house. A trifling incident brought it to her recollection. The candle that had burnt low now fell and went out. At the same moment a flash of lightning blazed into the room, followed by a crash of thunder. Gertrude shuddered until all was still, and crept about, looking, or rather *feeling* for the match-box. Then the first complaint burst from her patient lips.

"Oh! I do *wish* Jess had not gone off this evening, to stay all night, too. But I do not think she would have gone if she had known grandpa would be called away and I should be left alone," she added.

She lighted a candle; she looked at the clock. It was a quarter past ten. She had no thought of going to bed until the return of her grandfather. So she set the candle upon her work-stand, and sat down to sew. There seemed to be a lull in the storm; the rain was falling. In the midst of this silence came a sound familiar during the day, but unusual after sunset and unprecedented at this hour. It came from the opposite side of the river—

"BOAT!" She could scarcely believe her ears. She listened. The call came again.

"BOAT!" She hurried into the passage, and to the back door leading into the yard, and called the bull-dogs, Jupiter and Juno.

"Jupe! Juno! Good dogs!"

They replied with a yowl, assuring her of their presence at their post of duty. Encouraged by the sense of companionship, she left the back door open for them to enter, if required, and then she hurried to open the front door.

The night was still as dark as pitch; the rain was falling. Once more came the voice, borne across the river in an agony of entreaty—"BOAT!"

She seized a speaking-trumpet that hung by the door, and shouted through it: "COMING!"

Then she hurried into the house, lighted a candle, placed it in a lantern, took a waterproof cloak, put it on, drew the hood over her head, took up her lantern, and set out for the boat-house. She went down the path leading from the front door through the garden to the back gate. She closed the gate behind her, but did not go in on the pier. She went down a few steps on the left to the boat-house, where the boats were moored. She unmoored one of the lightest of the row-boats, and rowed herself on the open river. It was as dark as the River of Styx. She put her speaking-trumpet to her mouth and shouted: "Show a light on your side to guide the boat."

In a moment the voice replied:

"All right! Come on!"

In a moment the fire on the opposite bank blazed up.

The girl struck out towards it. The river was rough, and the night dark; but she was a skilful hand at the oars, and the light on the ripples of the water helped her to see her way, while the light on the opposite bank guided her to her goal. When half-way across the river there came a flash of lightning that revealed the whole scene—the opposite mountain with the awful cleft from summit to base, which served as a pass for foot-passengers or horsemen, but was impracticable for carriages; the beach below that afforded a road up and down the river bank; and a single human being on that beach—a man, who stood holdiug a horse by the bridle.

In another instant all the scene was swallowed up in darkness, and there was nothing visible except the lantern in the bows of the boat, the light on the river, and the smouldering fire on the opposite bank. But that fire was fitful—now blazing high, as if fed by some combustible

material, and now dying down as if dampened by the rain. Gertrude rowed toward that fitful light, drawing nearer to the shore under the precipice, until the bows of her boat grated upon the beach.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING MAN.

A DARK figure left the side of the smouldering fire, and, leading his horse, came down to the boat.

"Quick! quick, my man!" he said, in agitated tones, "put me across at once, and I will double your fee! quadruple it!"

Gertrude drew in her oars, and lifted up her lantern.

"By Jove! a girl!" exclaimed the traveller, in astonishment.

"The master of the Ferry, my grandfather, sir, was called out to see a sick neighbour. I am accustomed to serve the Ferry with the small boats in his occasional absence," Gertrude explained.

"You don't mean to say you rowed the boat over this rough river this stormy night?" exclaimed the traveller.

"There was no one else to do it," replied the girl.

"By Jupiter! you're a clipper! I wish I could see your face," said the man.

"If you are in a hurry, sir, you had better get into the boat. We are losing time," suggested Gertrude.

"Good heaven, you are right! My surprise at seeing a girl at such work made me forget—" The traveller stepped into the boat, attempting to lead his horse after him.

"You cannot bring your horse into the boat, sir," said Gertrude, firmly.

"Why not, pray?" inquired the man, sharply.

"Because it would be dangerous—nay, impossible to cross with him. He would sink the boat, which is one of the lightest on the ferry service," Gertrude explained.

"What the fiend am I to do? I cannot abandon him! And great Heaven! every moment I lose here—WHAT am I to do?" he broke off and demanded.

"Take the saddle from the horse's back, sir, and throw it in the boat. Leave the bridle on, and keep the end of it in your hand. Then seat yourself in the stern of the boat, keeping hold of the bridle. When we put off, the horse will follow you and swim across. That is the way we get the creatures across when we have only the little boats. When we have the great flat-boat, they can be ferried over."

While the girl spoke, the man was engaged in removing the saddle, which he threw into the bottom of the boat. Then following the girl's instructions, he got into the boat and seated himself, retaining the end of the bridle.

Gertrude pushed off her boat, then taking both oars, she laid them in their locks and plied them so vigorously, that the boat sped from the shore, the horse swimming behind. The rain had ceased, but the sky was black. Gertrude rowed toward the ferry-light that shone within the lantern, fixed on the top of the boat-house.

"Thank Heaven, we are off!" exclaimed the man.

The ferry-girl did not think a reply called for, but worked steadily at her oars.

"By Jove, you're a brick!" exclaimed the man.

Gertrude, unacquainted with city slang, thought that she had a harmless maniac for a fare.

"You're a trump, you are, and no mistake."

Gertrude smiled, and wondered what he would call her next.

"I say, look here now! By Jove, why don't you answer a fellow?"

"Because I don't know what to say to you," said the ferry-girl.

"Well, I declare! That's odd too! *I always* know what to say. Trouble is with me I don't know how to keep from saying it," observed the man, who had recovered his spirits since the boat left the shore. He soon proved his inability to "keep from saying it" by asking:

"Are you pretty now? I can't see for the life of me, by this light, and you can tell me that at least."

"Yes, the Lord has endowed me with some beauty," calmly answered the ferry-girl.

"Well, upon my sacred word and honour, I never heard such a speech from a girl's lips in all my life. Don't you think you are vain to say the Lord has given you beauty? Well! by Jove!" exclaimed the traveller.

"No, I know that I am not vain. Why should I be of that over which I have no control, for which I merit no personal credit? No, I am not vain; but I am grateful—*too* grateful to the Lord to deny the smallest of His gifts, even beauty," said Gertrude, reverently.

"Ah, you have other and greater gifts than beauty!"

"Yes, many others, I thank Heaven. But we will not talk more of myself. We are getting into the channel of the river; the current is strong, and it will require all my attention to ensure our safety," said Gertrude.

"All right. But I warn you I don't know how to keep from saying it—you're a STUNNER!"

Gertrude did not reply to this. There was no time; for, at that instant, there came the most vivid flash of lightning, lighting up the whole heavens and earth as with conflagration, attended by a crash of thunder as if a planet had burst above their heads and its ruins were rolling down the side of the mountains; and the next moment the scene seemed swallowed up in the bottomless pit of the blackness of darkness, while a deluge of rain fell from the clouds.

"Heaven and earth and the other place," exclaimed the traveller.

"The storm is coming around again. It is the way with our mountain storms. We must get to the land as soon as possible," said the ferry-girl.

"You're a *cucumber*, you are — that's what you are — a CUCUMBER!" exclaimed the young man.

Gertrude made no comment; the successful management of her boat required the concentration of all her faculties and the exertion of all her strength. Her difficulties were increased by the action of the horse, who, panic-stricken at the thunderbolt, had recovered himself to the degree of trembling from head to foot so that he shook the boat; but still he swam after it.

"See! You're—you're—you're a SMASHER! that you

are! I don't flatter you a bit! But look here now! I said I wouldn't abandon the horse on the other side; but now, if you say so, I'll cut him loose and let him take his chance rather than give you so much trouble," said the traveller, excitedly.

"No, you need not do that. He does not pull back; and so long as he does not do that I can get along," said Gertrude, smiling at the zeal of her harmless maniac.

"All right! You're a POSER! And if any man says you're not, by Jove, I'll—I'll scalp him!"

They were nearing the land, and in another moment the boat grated on the sands.

Gertrude drew in her oars, took up her lantern and stepped upon the shore at the foot of the pier-stairs.

The man let go the horse, who scrambled up on the beach and snorted loudly, and shook himself. The man followed last of all.

"I will put this boat away for you, if you will tell me how to do it. I know no more of a boat than my horse there does of a spinning-wheel," said the stranger.

"I thank you; you can help me. I will show you how," replied Gertrude. And with the traveller's assistance the boat was soon moored in the boat-house.

"I think you had better come up to the house and remain until the storm is over. My grandfather will be home in an hour or two," said Gertrude, hospitably.

"A thousand thanks, my dear girl; you're a tower of strength in the time of trouble! I did't mean to alliterate; but I don't know how to keep from saying it," replied the traveller, as he took his saddle over his arm and followed his guide. She led him up the pier-steps and through the gate, and up the walk leading to the front door. As they approached the house, the two bull-dogs, Jupiter and Juno, burst forth from the open door.

"Stop here. I must quiet the dogs," said Gertrude.

"What, Jupe? What, Juno? Traveller, good dogs, traveller," she said, laying her hands upon their necks.

Jupiter growled out his regrets that he was so deceived, assuring his mistress in dog language, that on his word of honour he mistook them for thieves.

"You may come on now, sir. Take my lantern. Lead your horse through that gate to the left, into an

alley that will lead you to the stable. You will find the stable-door unfastened, and you can put up your horse there, and give him a feed if you think proper. You will find all that you want in the building, and a pump of water in the yard. When you have got through you will please come into the house. I am sorry that our boatman is not at home to do this for you," said Gertrude.

"Don't say a word, my dear girl. You are such a brick!" exclaimed the traveller, as he led his horse off.

Meanwhile Gertrude entered the house and took off her overshoes and her waterproof cloak; then she entered the sitting-room. She glanced at the clock and saw that it was on the stroke of twelve. Her grandfather had not come home, but doubtless the storm had delayed him. He would soon be home now, she thought, for the storm had expended its fury and was subsiding; the rain fell in gentler showers; the lightning was fainter. The thunder only muttered in the distance.

She thought of the stranger's dripping clothes.

"He must be wet through," she said to herself, as she passed to her grandfather's chamber.

Just as she returned to the sitting-room she saw the stranger, who had entered it. He was standing near the work-stand on which stood the lighted candle. She had a good look at him. He was a fair young man, of twenty years of age; of middle height, and spare of flesh, with a large head and broad forehead, rounded and 'bumptious' above the temples; a pug nose and a well-curved mouth, and chin innocent of mustache or beard. His complexion was florid; his eyes gray; his eyebrows well-defined; and his hair red, fine, curly, and abundant. He had a pleasing and handsome face. He was clothed in a blue riding-coat, drab trousers, and top-boots, but these were saturated with water.

"Well, my dear hostess, I look on this as 'Thank God Harbour.' Never was tempest-tossed mariner more grateful for a haven," said the youth, as he saw her.

"You are welcome. My name is Gertrude Haddon," said the ferry-girl, gravely.

"Your most humble servant, Miss Haddon! I am proud to make your acquaintance. You're a GUN—you are, indeed! I'll burn the man who dares to say you're

not. So you are, Miss Gertrude Haddon. Well, that means I must introduce myself, I suppose. And so I must. My name is Sallust Rowley, at your disposal. Named Sallust after some old Roman swell or another. But my 'old folks at home' call me Sally. Isn't that aggravation enough to make a cove run away to sea, or 'list for a soldier, eh?"

Instead of answering his question, Gertrude said, gravely:

"Mr. Rowley, you are very wet. If you will go into the opposite room, you will find a suit of my grandfather's clothes laid out for you."

"A million of mercies, Miss Haddon! I go; and oh, if you love me, give me something to eat when I come out. I have not tasted a morsel to-day, and my stomach has collapsed like an empty purse," he said.

"I will have food ready for you, Mr. Rowley," said Gertrude, closing the door of the sitting-room as a hint that he should pass on to his toilet. Ten minutes later, Mr. Sallust Rowley emerged from his retirement, clad in a suit of Gabriel Haddon's clothes, which, being too long and loose for him, failed to set off the attractions of his person to the best advantage. When he re-entered the parlour, he found the table set with a meal of bread, butter, cheese, ham, beef, berries, and milk.

"A feast for a king! Will you not join me in it, my fair hostess?" said the young man.

"No, thanks, I supped some hours ago," answered the ferry-girl, as she proceeded to help her guest liberally.

"I say," exclaimed the young man, after he had satisfied the wolf within him by disposing of several slices of meat and bread—"I say, you *are* a beauty, by Jove! that you are! But you were vain to think yourself a beauty, for all that; and uncommon frank to tell me what you thought about yourself. But I like you ever so much. I do, upon my word."

Gertrude made no reply, but poured out a glass of milk, which she set before him. He drank it and resumed:

"Look here now, I'm in blood earnest—I am indeed! The more I look at you the more I like you! I do believe it is a case of love at first sight. I do, really."

"Thank you," said Gertrude, smiling.

"See here now—I'm awful rich and shall be my own master in a year; there is nothing against my character, except that I am in a little trouble now; but if you knew what it was for, you would say I was a brick—you would! But look here now, I would like to marry you, if you will have me; I declare I would."

"You are very good," said Gertrude, screwing her mouth up to keep from laughing outright.

"Well, if you think so, I hope you'll have me as soon as I can get hold of a parson, if it be to-morrow morning. I don't see the use of people waiting after they have made up their minds—*do* you? I think we ought to begin to be happy just as we can—don't you?" he eagerly inquired.

"But I have not made up my mind," said Gertrude.

"What? Oh! Ah! Maybe you are in love with some other man now. Don't get mad with me. I don't mean any harm; but are you in love with any other man?"

"Yes, I am," answered Gertrude, suppressing a smile.

He dropped the glass that he held in his hand, and gazed at her in amazement, exclaiming:

"Well, if you are not the frankest fellow I ever met with in all the days of my life! Who *is* the man? Set fire to him; I'd like to burn him!"

"He is my dear grandfather. I have been in love with him all my life, and you must not speak evil of him," said Gertrude.

"Her 'dear grandfather!' Oh, bother him! I don't mind him! See here, now, let's talk sense—"

The sense the ingenious youth was about to talk, was cut short by a sound of—

"BOAT!"

"There is some one calling from the other side of the river, who wants to cross the ferry," said Gertrude.

But the face of her guest—the joyous, florid face—had turned pale as marble. He started to his feet, and caught the arm of the ferry-girl.

"Don't—don't! for the Lord's sake, don't go!"

"BOAT!" shouted the voice from the opposite bank.

"Why must I not go? That is a call which we never disregard. I went through the storm to ferry you over!"

"But it is after midnight, now! Look at the clock!" replied the young man.

"So it is. Oh, what can keep grandpa? I wish he would come. I hope he will be here soon; but I ought to cross the river and fetch the travellers, whoever they may be, that come at this strange hour."

"BOAT!" called the weird voice from over the water.

"Come; let me go! I cannot stand here and listen to that call without obeying it," said the ferry-girl.

"Don't! Don't! for the love of Heaven, don't!" cried the young man, in an agony of entreaty.

"Why must I not?" again demanded the girl.

"I will tell you! They are in pursuit of me!"

"Why — what have you been doing?" inquired Gertrude.

"Nothing, but what you would approve! You'd call me the biggest kind of a brick, if you knew."

"Then why do they pursue you?"

"I cannot tell you; they are hunting me to my death, though; for I swear by all my hopes of salvation, I will never be taken alive!"

"BOAT!" cried the voice across the waters.

"You will not answer? You will not go?"

Gertrude stood hesitating.

"I have friends whose hearts will be broken if I die!" he exclaimed.

Still the young girl paused in deep thought.

"I love this world's bright life and light," pleaded the young man. Still she hesitated with her head bowed upon her chest.

"I have a little fatherless and motherless sister, who would be left destitute by my death."

"BOAT!" shouted the voice from across the waters.

"Gertrude Haddon, what will you do?" questioned the young man, in an agony of entreaty. Then she lifted up her eyes, looked at him and innocently spoke her thought.

"Why! You plead with me in anguish for your life, while I am in your power. You could bind me, where I stand, and effectually prevent my taking the boat over the river and bringing your pursuers to this side."

"I?" exclaimed the youth. "Why, I never thought of doing such a base act! I would not do it—no, not to

save my own life, or even that of my little ophan sister," he added, and as he spoke the foolish, thoughtless face grew for a moment enobled and heroic.

"B-O-A-T!" roared the maddening voice from across the Wilde.

"I will not answer the summons," said Gertrude, gravely—"I will save you."

CHAPTER III.

THE FLIGHT.

THE fugitive dropped Gertrude's hand and sank back in his seat, overcome with the reaction of excitement. His face was pale as death; his frame shaking as with an ague fit. The ferry-girl gazed on him with wonder and pity.

Now, "if pity be akin to love" on the one hand, it is allied to contempt on the other. Perhaps the youth, as he raised his eyes and caught the expression of her face, might have fancied that the maiden's pity was the nearer to contempt, for he exclaimed:

"I'm no coward. But, you see, hanging isn't what it's cracked up to be. No, that it isn't."

"I do not think that you are a coward," said Gertrude.

"No, nor I'm no criminal neither. Upon my sacred word of honour, I'm not," he added, earnestly.

"I am sure you are not," said Gertrude, readily.

"Though, I dare say, I do look like one," he observed.

Gertrude could not forbear a smile as she glanced at the innocent face of the youth, with its frank blue eyes, turned-up nose, soft, girlish mouth, and smooth, beardless chin.

"No, no," she answered, quickly. "You certainly do not look the least bit like a criminal."

"Why? Did *you* ever see one?" he inquired.

"No, I never saw one; but I can easily imagine that no criminal ever looked like you," she answered.

"Do you know now that makes me feel happy? I declare it does! Well, now—" Before he could add another word the noise that had ceased for a while, re-commenced.

"BOAT!" roared a chorus of voices from across the river.

"Set fire to your throats! Now, yell to your hearts' content! You won't get any boat to-night!" cried the stranger. Then turning to the ferry-girl, he inquired, "Oh, I say, you don't mind their howling, do you?"

"Not at all," answered Gertrude.

"You are the very jolliest brick! All right, then, let them bawl to their souls' satisfaction."

"B-O-A-T!" roared the voices.

"Oh, go it! Don't stop in consideration of our feelings! We can find ears as long as you can find throats," remarked the young man. Then, as if remembering something, he looked at the ferry-girl, and exclaimed:

"Oh, I say, how did you find out that I am no criminal and no coward, much as I look like both, eh?"

"You neither look nor act like either," answered Gertrude.

"Oh, yes, I do! I feel I do! Haven't I run away?"

"For some good reason, doubtless, which is neither criminal nor cowardly."

"But they say flight is always a sign of guilt."

"Not always; not in your case."

"Well, now, do you know you lift me right off my feet when you say that? But how did you find it out, that is what I want to know?"

"Oh, easily enough. When your pursuers reached the opposite side of the river and called for the boat, you pleaded with me, when you might have compelled me. A criminal, under the same circumstances, would have insured his safety by binding me hand and foot, or locking me in the room to prevent me crossing the ferry. You did not attempt to do anything of the sort."

While Gertrude spoke, the young man's eyebrows lifted themselves higher, his blue eyes opened wider, his lips fell apart, and his countenance expressed the drollest astonishment.

"You said that before," he exclaimed. "But, in the

first place, I never once *thought* of such a base and treacherous act. And, in the second place, if the father of fraud *had* suggested it to me, I would have *died* before yielding to such a temptation. Yes, ma'am. If you had chosen to refuse my plea, and had gone across the water, in your ferry-boat, to bring the bloodhounds on my track, I should have mounted my horse and tried to escape; but what could I have done with my tired horse, that I had ridden all day long, against half a dozen men mounted on fresh horses, obtained from the last post-house on their road? I could have done nothing! I should have been brought to bay by my hunters before morning. But I would not have been taken alive to bring shame on my family. No. I should have been a dead man by this time. There, don't let's talk about it! It makes your flesh creep, I see!" he concluded.

"B-O-A-T!" thundered a full orchestra of voices from over the water.

"*Encore!*" laughed the fugitive. "You are sure you don't mind their bellowing?" he inquired of his companion.

"Quite sure," she answered.

"All right, let them bellow. It will do them good. Oh, I say, you *are* such a trump, I'd like ever so much to give you a kiss—but, I beg your pardon, I declare I do! The words slipped out, on my word they did! I wouldn't offer to do such a rude, offensive thing for the world, under these circumstances; I declare I wouldn't. You are not angry with me, I hope?" he inquired.

"No, I am not; but I trust that you will remember you are my guest," gently replied the ferry-girl.

"And your debtor for my life, too; I will remember, and I tell you what else I will do. I will marry you as soon as I get out of this awful scrape—that is, if you will have me; and I think you will when you know me better. I'm rather a good sort, I am! And I'm *awful* rich. When I say 'awful' rich, I know what I am talking about; for I have an immense property, and I know it is going to be a horrid bother to take care of it all. So I'll marry you if you will have me, and you will walk into one of the finest estates on this Continent. I declare you will! And you will deserve

it, a deal better than I do who was born to it. You will be the mistress of the grandest old house, in the country, you will, really!—an old ancestral home built in the year, 1648, and you'll be an honour to it! You are such a jolly stunner—that you are! Now, you think on what I have told you, that's a good fellow, and don't go marrying any other beat, and I'll come straight back to you the minute I am out of this horrid mess, you see if I don't, now!" concluded the youth, looking about himself.

"What is it that you want?" inquired Gertrude.

"My hat. I am going now. My horse has had a feed and a rest, thanks to your goodness—you are such a perfect trump!—that I think he can take me another stage to-night. This morning, I mean. Look at the clock!"

Gertrude saw that the hands pointed to half-past three.

"Oh! I wonder what keeps my grandfather?" she cried.

"I don't know, my dear girl; not having the pleasure of the old gentleman's acquaintance; but I know it is fortunate for me that *something* keeps him. If he were here, he might take it into his grandfatherly head to fetch the enemy over the water. Good-bye, my dear! I am going now to get my horse and shall pass out through the alley."

"But—do you not wish to put on your own proper clothing?" inquired his young hostess, blushing.

"Ah, no. The grandfatherly raiment makes a better disguise. Stay—bless my soul alive! I have left my pocket-book and all my money in the coat-pocket of my other suit. If you will permit me, I will go and get it."

Gertrude bowed assent, and the young man went to Gabriel Haddon's room, and soon returned, bringing a well-filled portmonnaie with him.

"Here, my dear girl," he said, selecting three notes of twenty dollars each, "here I leave my wet clothes to get dry, and I leave this sum in payment of the patriarchal suit I wear away. Take it, if you please."

"No, no, no! indeed I cannot!" exclaimed Gertrude, shaking her head and putting her hands behind her.

"I will put it on the mantelpiece, and put this brass candlestick on it to keep it from blowing away. You have no right to refuse it. And I have no right to wear away these clothes without paying for them," said the young stranger, depositing the notes in the improvised bank.

"I do wish you would not persist in leaving that money here," expostulated the ferry-girl.

"Do you, my dear? You are such a tip-top out and out trump! A number one, jolly stunner! Wouldn't Pat. take a shine to you neither?" he exclaimed. "Don't know though, after all," he added. "She might be jealous—this Pat.!"

"Pat.?" echoed Gertrude, interrogatively.

"Yes, Pat.,—Pat. Fitz.! I say, she might be jealous and give *me* fits."

"Do you mean Miss Patricia Fitzgerald?"

"Yes, I mean Miss Patricia Fitzgerald, my imp of a cousin. We are *all* cousins in Wilde county, you know. I have no doubt that you are my cousin also! In fact, you must be, if you are a native of Wilde county. Well, good-night, Cousin Gertrude:

'Good-night, good-night, parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good-night, 'till it be to-morrow!'

And I'm blessed if it isn't to-morrow, too, as Pat. would say. Look at the clock! So good-morning, my dear girl. I am off now. And now for the Summit, like a bird of illomen, to carry bad news to a waiting bride! I hope Gerry won't strike me down dead with the lightning of her eyes!"

"Gerry?" repeated Gertrude, in perplexity.

"Yes, Gerry Fitz—

'From the glance of her eye
Shun danger and fly,
For fatal's the glance.'

And I have got to brave it this morning. Pray for me, my dear girl. Pray that I may be delivered from death, the devil, and Gerry's angry eyes."

"Are you talking of Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald, *the bride-elect?*" inquired the ferry-girl, in a tone of awe.

"Just. I am talking of Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald, the bride-elect—'the queenly Geraldine.' She is another cousin. What did I tell you? We are all cousins in Wilde county—we are all cousins in Virginia. Well, good-morning, Cousin Gertrude. I tear myself away. I go, like good King Arthur, of the legend—

'To slay and to be slain.'"

So saying, the eccentric traveller bowed himself out of the room. In one minute she heard his voice in the back-yard, expostulating with the bull-dogs, who first resented his intrusion there with growls of defiance; and then, as they recognized, welcomed him with glad barks of friendship and apology. Two minutes afterwards, she heard him gallop through the alley, and down the turnpike-road in the direction of the Old Red Sandstone Church.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FITZGERALDS OF THE SUMMIT.

ON the same stormy night that witnessed the flight of Sallust Rowley across the Wilde, Geraldine Fitzgerald sat in her bower in Summit Manor House, wounded, sorrowful, indignant, awaiting the coming of her bridegroom.

No nobler race of men ever bore the honours of a long descent, than did the far-famed family of the Gherardini or Fitzgeralds, a great house of Italian origin, now colonized all over the civilized world, who honour as their feudal head the Irish Duke of Leinster. More than two hundred years ago, a brave cadet of that princely house, one Otho-Maurice-Gerald Fitzgerald, for some service rendered the realm, received a royal grant of land and a sum of money from Queen Elizabeth, with which he emigrated to Virginia, settled on his estate, and built a manor-house.

He brought with him as his bride a lady of a noble Scottish house of Douglas, and in due course of time he became the patriarch of a tribe of sons and grandsons, all of whom received royal grants of lands in the vicinity of the Summit Manor; and daughters and granddaughters, all of whom married landed proprietors in the neighbourhood, until nearly all the whole tract known as the Wildes became the property of the Fitzgeralds and their connections.

The Summit Manor descended from father to eldest son, until the time of the commencement of our story it came into the possession of Gerald Fitzgerald, one of the most accomplished gentlemen of his race. But all the other manors of the Fitzgeralds in Wilde county had 'fallen to the distaff'—that is, failing male heirs, they had passed into the possession of a girl, the only daughter of Otho Fitzgerald, of Forest Lodge, the queenly Geraldine, who, to keep the estates in the family name, had been from her childhood, betrothed to her cousin Gerald, second son of Maurice Fitzgerald of the Summit Manor.

When Geraldine was but five years of age, she lost both parents by a catastrophe. While crossing the Wilde in an open boat, they were overtaken by a squall, capsized and drowned. After their death a search was made for a will, but none was found. The Orphan's Court acted in the premises, and appointed the child's nearest of kin, her two uncles, Maurice Fitzgerald, of the Summit Manor, and Royal Greenleaf, of Greenwood, as guardians of the heiress and trustees of her estates. Royal Greenleaf, a bachelor, left the child to the charge of her senior guardian.

All the Fitzgeralds had been Roman Catholics, from a thousand years before, when their Tuscan progenitors Gherardini, had gone carpet-bagging into Ireland; therefore, the heiress of half a dozen manors must be educated as a Roman Catholic.

Maurice Fitzgerald was a widower, with two sons—Maurice, the heir of the Summit Manor, and Gerald the cadet, heir to nothing but the Fitzgerald's name, and the Fitzgerald's Irish-Italian beauty, with no daughters, and with only a faithful coloured housekeeper at the head of his establishment. Taking these

circumstances into consideration Maurice Fitzgerald resolved to convey his infant ward to Paris, and leave her to be educated in a convent.

His second son, Gerald, he had determined should be sent to West Point to be educated for the army. And now, since getting the heiress of many manors into his hands, he destined these cousins for each other. The fortune of Geraldine would make his portionless younger son richer than his eldest son and heir. As if to favour his project, the orphan child of five summers had formed a strong attachment to the handsome lad of fifteen. When the farce of a betrothal was performed between these two, and a tiny diamond ring was placed on the finger of Geraldine, she readily promised that when she should grow up to be a woman she would marry her dear Cousin Gerald, and no other.

The lad yielded to his father's will in what he considered a comedy, but had thought enough to limit *his* promise with a condition: he would marry his cousin when she should grow up to be a woman if she should continue to love him. Thus the cousins parted. The youth left home to enter the Military Academy at West Point. The child was conveyed abroad. During the voyage across the Atlantic, Mr. Fitzgerald took care to impress on the little one's mind and heart the solemn nature of a betrothal, and her duty to think of her Cousin Gerald, as her future husband, and the only one she could marry.

And the infant answered, assuring him that she never would think about marrying anybody else, and revealing her 'innocence in ignorance' by such words as these:

"No, unky, I never will marry nobody but dear, darling Cousin Gerald, not even a queen or a fairy lady."

When he left Geraldine at the Convent of the Visitation in Paris, he took care to have an interview with the Mother Superior, in which he informed that lady, that the infant heiress he had left in her charge, was betrothed to her cousin, a worthy son of the church, whom it was desirable that she should marry, and that the child must be kept in the thought that she must be as faithful to her betrothed as she was to her religion.

The Mother Superior promised to follow the instructions of Mr. Fitzgerald, and so the interview terminated, and the Virginian gentleman returned to his native country.

Years passed. The cadet Gerald Fitzgerald graduated first in his class, and received his commisssion as a lieutenant of cavalry. To make the most of a leave of absence, he ran over to Paris on a visit to his betrothed. He found her a beautiful child, ten years old, and tall for her age. She had not forgotten him. She had been faithful to his memory. And with what worshipping eyes the child looked up to him now, in the splendour of his manhood, arrayed in the handsome uniform of a cavalry officer.

He thought her the loveliest rosebud that had ever bloomed within convent walls, and he hoped he would be able to wait patiently and keep faith like a true knight during the eight years that must pass before she should reach a marriageable age.

He returned home and was soon appointed to a regiment ordered to Florida, where the Indian war had broken out. There he so distinguished himself for courage, skill, and tactics, that he soon rose to the rank of captain. When the war was terminated, he came home on leave and went abroad to visit his betrothed at her convent. He found her now a beautiful brunette of fourteen, so tall for her age that she looked sixteen years old; and if she no longer looked up to him with the worshipping gaze of childhood, she dropped her beautiful eyes as her colour deepened beneath his gaze; for now he was passionately in love with her.

He lingered in Paris, visiting her every day, and stayed as long as he liked, and that was very long; for in the exaggeration of his love, he declared he lived only in her presence, died as soon as he left her, and came to life again only when it was time to re-visit her. He lingered in Paris up to the latest day he could stay with safety, and left only when he was forced to hurry away to reach his native country in time to report for duty at the expiration of his leave of absence.

When he reached Washington, he learned that war had been declared against Mexico, and the country

was arming for the conflict. His regiment was ordered to join General Scott.

In Mexico the young officer performed miracles of military valour, made his name famous, and rose to the rank of Brevet-Brigadier-General. After the termination of the war, he was sent in command of an expedition against the Indians of the Plains, whose turbulence kept him on active duty on the frontier for some years longer, and until a letter from his father, informing him of the death of his elder brother, from congestion of the brain, summoned him home. Then he obtained leave of absence, and hastened back to his native State. He found his father much shattered by the blow he had received on the unexpected death of his eldest son. To distract his grief, the old gentleman proposed to go to France and bring back his ward, Geraldine Fitzgerald, who was in her nineteenth year.

Colonel Fitzgerald (for he was called Colonel Fitzgerald at home, although he was a Brigadier-General by brevet) would have gladly gone with his father on this mission of love, had his leave of absence allowed him; but it did not, nor would the soldier ask for an extension of leave, while he knew that his presence was needed at his frontier post of duty.

So in September the father and son parted—the father to go on his sea-voyage, the son to return to the Western plains. If any circumstance could have consoled Maurice Fitzgerald for the loss of his eldest son, it must have been the finding of his queenly niece and prospective daughter-in-law.

Geraldine Fitzgerald at nineteen was one of the most imperial beauties that ever lived in this or any other country; and she was not only imperial in presence, but imperious in temper! Her form was unusually tall, but so perfectly proportioned that her attitude and motion were full of majestic grace. Her features were cast in the purest Grecian mould; her complexion was pale and clear, save where it flushed on the cheeks and glowed on the lips; her eyes were deep blue, and fringed with black lashes, that made them seem black as night; her hair was black, and lustrous, and worn in braids, coiled in a roll at the back of her head, wound around and set a natural crown above her forehead.

Mr. Fitzgerald was proud of his daughter-in-law elect. Looking at her, he thought that she would not only make his beloved son doubly rich with her wealth, but happy with her love; for it was apparent to Mr. Fitzgerald that this beautiful woman still loved her handsome cousin. But he did not know her. She was but a brilliant young panther, capable of loving, adoring, yea, worshipping her betrothed husband, so long as she believed herself to be the first object of his thoughts; capable of wounding him unto death if her suspicion of his fidelity should be aroused. As yet nothing had occurred to disturb her confidence. Her faith in her betrothed was as strong as her love for him, and both were as strong as life and death.

She parted with the abbess, the only mother she had ever known, and with the kindly nuns, her companions for years, and with her schoolmates, who loved her well, and she left them gladly without regret, because she was thinking only of her betrothed husband, caring only for him, and going to him. But disappointment awaited her at home.

She was brought by her guardian to the Summit Manor House, where his old maiden cousin, Miss Maxima Rowley, had been induced to act as the chaperone of the young heiress, until such time as her marriage with Gerald Fitzgerald should enable her to dispense with such protection. But the bridegroom expectant was not there to meet them, as they had hoped he would be. A letter met them instead, in which the writer informed his betrothed bride that the Comanche and Apache tribes of Indians were giving great trouble to the frontier settlers, and that he could not then ask for a furlough—a soldier's place, in the hour of danger, was at his post. Mr. Fitzgerald was much disappointed.

"Gerald ought to have asked for a furlough. He could have got one on the asking, but his chivalric sense of honour prevented him doing so, I suppose," he said.

But Geraldine was more than disappointed; she was embittered. Her lips quivered for a moment, and then closed firmly; the tears sprang to her eyes, but were repressed. Mr. Fitzgerald saw the indignation, without perceiving the wounded love beneath it.

"It is Gerald's chivalric sense of honour, you know, my dear," he repeated, deprecatingly.

"Colonel Fitzgerald should resign. There can be no reason why the heir-apparent of Summit Manor should continue to wear—the *livery* of any government under the sun: for the uniform *is* a livery, a mere badge of servitude. Gerald Fitzgerald, the heir of Summit Manor and my betrothed husband, should resign his commission at once," she answered.

"An officer and a gentleman as my son is, never resigns in time of danger. He resigns, if he pleases, when the danger is over," exclaimed Mr. Fitzgerald.

Geraldine's lip curled as she turned proudly away. But the next day another letter came from Colonel Fitzgerald—a letter so eloquent of the soldier's noble love for his bride, that her anger was almost appeased, although he still talked of a long campaign in the Indian country and set his duty above his love.

But when Christmas and New Year came and passed without bringing him home, her indignation blazed forth again.

Winter melted into spring, and spring bloomed into summer before the Indian troubles were over and the faithful soldier was recalled home. He hastened into Virginia to see his betrothed, whom he had not seen for five long years. Their meeting was a compensation for all the trying days of absence. He found her more beautiful than ever. She thought him more princely and heroic than the dreams of her fancy had pictured him. Their marriage-day was fixed for the sixteenth of July. And this settled, Colonel Fitzgerald left for Washington to transact important business there, previous to resigning his commission as a colonel of cavalry.

The queenly Geraldine now busied herself with preparations for her wedding. Her trousseau had been ordered from Paris, some months previous, in anticipation of the marriage, and she was daily expecting its arrival by the train of carriers' waggons that did duty as "express" and communicated between the seaports and interior.

Early in July, the treasures arrived per barque *Mary Eliza*, from London to Alexandria, and were dispatched

by waggon to Wildeville. A letter from the Alexandria agent apprised Mr. Fitzgerald of what had been done, and a cart went to Wildeville to meet the waggon and bring the parcels to the Summit.

The Summit Manor House was well named. It was a huge structure of red sandstone, built in the form of a letter H, on a lofty plateau overlooking the Wilde, half way down between Haddon's Ferry and the village of Wildeville. The grounds were terraced in front of the house, and planted with the most beautiful trees and shrubs. And house and grounds had been lately renovated in honour of the approaching nuptials.

On the morning of the day on which our story began, a party of young people were assembled in one of the front chambers of the manor-house, whose open front windows commanded a magnificent view of the Wilde River and the Eagle-Roost Ridge beyond it.

The youthful party consisted of the bride-elect and her bride-maids, all chosen from among her nearest relatives and best beloved friends. The beautiful dark-haired Geraldine sat at one of the windows, with her elbows on the sill, her head resting on her hand, and her gaze fixed on the bridle-path that led down the Summit to the Wildeville Turnpike.

She wore a rich loose wrapper of maize-coloured India silk, embroidered with gold, and folded around her. Her shining black hair flowed down her shoulders. Her feet, thrust into India satin slippers, rested on a footstool. She had been trying on dress after dress from the trousseau that had arrived that morning. She was weary of it all, as it lay glowing in heaps on the bed, on the tables, on the chairs, and on every available place in her chamber; and she was weary of waiting for the lagging bridegroom. He had been due here for more than a week, for this house was his home more than hers. It was his home in right of his father, as it was her home in right of her guardian, and yet he neither came nor wrote, though their wedding-day was at hand.

Why had he not come, according to promise? Or, if any obstacle prevented him from coming, why had he not written to explain?

There were two arrivals from Washington by coach

to Wildeville every day, yet they had passed for a week without bringing the man himself, or any message.

Geraldine had written to him twice, but her letters remaining unanswered, she had stopped in pride. Mr. Fitzgerald had written several times, but his letters shared the same fate. He would have gone to Washington to make inquiries for his missing son, but he was held a prisoner in his chamber by the gout. He might have written and made inquiries of other parties in Washington; but during the recess of Congress he had not a single acquaintance in the city; nor did he like to address any stranger on a family matter, unless driven to do so by stress of circumstances. And he considered that this case did not yet require desperate remedies.

Some affair easily explained had taken his son out of town for a day or two. Doubtless he had written to apprise them of his absence, but had left his letter to be posted by the careless hotel waiters, and it had been lost. But Gerald Fitzgerald was the very soul of honour and would keep his tryst with his bride, come what might.

"There are yet three more chances for him to be in time," Mr. Fitzgerald had explained to his niece that morning. "He may come by this evening's coach, or by to-morrow morning's or by to-morrow evening's coach."

"But if he should fail to come, and so shame me before the gentry of Wilde county!" muttered Geraldine.

"Gerald Fitzgerald will never fail to keep his plighted word. He will come up to time, be sure of it."

This conversation had taken place between the guardian and his ward during the visit she had that morning made to him. But some hours later, when the bride-elect sat at the window of her chamber, attended by her bride-maids, she did not feel sure of her bridegroom's punctuality. She recalled the months she had waited for him, while he was defending the settlers against the Indians of the Plains, when he might have resigned and returned to her, but would not. She bitterly reflected that she had never been the first object of his life as he had always been of hers. She knew there were several principles he rated above his

love for her—there was honour, duty, to which his love for her had always to give way! While with *her*, neither honour, duty, 'nor any other creature' ever could, stand between *her* love and him.

She said to herself that some real or fancied "point of honour," or sense of duty, kept him absent and silent now, and might keep him from her on their appointed wedding-day, and so expose her proud spirit to the humiliation of seeming to be a discarded bride at the altar! While she sat there silent, sorrowful and indignant, her bride-maids and one or two servants, who were folding and arranging the dresses, chattered about her over the magnificence of her trousseau.

"What dat you chillun talking 'bout trousers? 'Trousers!' I ain't seed no trousers yet. 'Sides which, what on de face of de yeth do a young lady want with trousers 'mongst her weddin' clothes?" said Aunt Het., the fat coloured housekeeper who had come from the kitchen to see the finery, and stood, in the glory of a plaid gingham dress, white apron, white neck handkerchief, and white head handkerchief. "What about dem dere trousers, I keep axin' of yer, chillun? I don't see no trousers. And what de monkey do a decent young 'oman want wid trousers?"

"Trousseau, madame, trousseau. Mademoiselle could not be married vidout de trousseau," explained Mademoiselle Desirée, the French dresser whom Miss Fitzgerald had brought with her from Paris.

"Ah! dat's it, is it? Thanky, Miss Daisy Ray. 'Trash-oh'—I'll 'member. No young lady can be married without her 'trash-oh.' Well, begging of my Misses's pardon, dere's trash nuff in it, I do 'spects," grunted Aunt Het.

"I think not so, madame. *Voila!* this bridal toilet, vid robe and veil and wreath and fan and handkerchief and gloves *en suite*. The *tout ensemble* is perfect."

"'Tooting cymbals?' I ain't talking 'bout no tooting cymbals, chile! We is got a band of our own cullud fiddlers and tambouriners to make music for our chillun. We don't want no tooting cymbals, Miss Daisy Ray."

Mademoiselle Desirée lifted her eyebrows with a comic look of despair and turned to fold a Cashmere shawl and restore it to its box.

Nearest Geraldine loitered her cousin, Patricia Fitzgerald, a black-haired, gray-eyed, pug-nosed, yet pretty, rosy, and bewitching imp of fifteen years of age. Attired in a blue gingham dress, with white ruffles around her neck and wrists, and her black hair curling around her piquant face.

She had come to the Summit only that morning to meet the other bride-maids, and expecting to meet the bridegroom and groomsmen, and all the bridal-party. She had felt much anxiety to know the reason for the delay. She could control her curiosity no longer.

She dropped on the carpet beside Geraldine, and looked up into her grave face and exclaimed: "Cousin Gerry!"

"I request you, Patricia, not to address me in that manner. To think of calling any lady 'Gerry,'" she remarked.

"Gerry is the short for Geraldine, is it not? Besides, don't every one call me 'Pat.?'" laughed Patricia.

"*I* do not, most certainly," said the young lady.

"Where is the gallant Captain, Gerry?"

"If you refer to Colonel Fitzgerald, he is still in Washington, detained by his affairs."

"When do you expect him?"

"This evening or to-morrow morning."

"Where's my Sally?"

"Your—*what?*"

"He's not a 'what' he's a 'who'—my *Sally*—Sally Row."

"I presume you mean Mr. Sallust Rowley?"

"The same," said Patricia. "Where is that auburn-haired youth? It is not possible he is detained in Washington by *his* affairs, for he has no affairs, not even an affair of love or an affair of honour. He ought to be here to-day. He is to be first groomsman, and I am to be first bride-maid, he will have to lead me out. I never acted in the comedy of a marriage ceremony in all my life, and I should like to go through one private rehearsal of my part before appearing in public. Where, oh where is my Sally?"

"Mr. Sallust Rowley is most probably in attendance on Colonel Fitzgerald. They will most likely travel down here together."

"Thanks, Geraldine. And while I am inquiring after missing people—this is a house of inexplicable disappearances, like the Ogre's Castle in the nursery tales—where is Miss Max? I trust it is not a sin to hope that the Ogre may have eaten her?" inquired Patricia.

"Miss Maxima Rowley has been summoned to Hill Top Hall to attend her uncle, General Slaughter, who has been taken ill."

"Is his illness contagious and—dangerous?" inquired Patricia.

"Neither, I hope," answered Geraldine. Patricia raised her eyes to the ceiling and sighed.

"Miss Maxima, who knows General Slaughter's constitution and habits, said when she left yesterday, she thought it was only one of his bilious attacks, that would be over in a few hours, and enable her to return here to-morrow morning at latest."

"One of his brandy attacks, she means. *I* know. And it will kill him some dese yer days, mind!" put in old Het.

"No, it won't, Aunt Het. General Slaughter is over ninety years of age, and has fallen into an incurable habit of *living*. He'll never die. Oh, my Sally! Where are you, and why don't you come to your devoted Pat.?"

"Patricia," said Miss Fitzgerald, "I must talk to you very seriously. You have contracted a habit of calling people by nick-names much too familiarly, and of mixing up masculine and feminine names in the most absurd and confusing manner. You——"

"Stop, Cousin Gerry! *I* didn't mix 'em! To begin with, we Fitzgeralds and Rowleys and the rest of us are so inextricably mixed up, that Old Nick couldn't tell who is kin to whom! As for the rest, I only abbreviate their long names. Life is too short to waste in pronouncing them in full," said Patricia.

At this moment the first dinner-bell rang, and the bevy of bride-maids flew to their rooms to make some change in the carriage dresses, in which they had come to the house that morning.

"Vat toilette vill Mademoiselle wear?" inquired the French maid, coming to the side of her mistress.

Geraldine aroused herself from her painful abstraction, and answered:

"Peach Organdy with white lace, pearl jewellery—or anything."

The French maid courtesied, dressed her mistress to please herself, tastily, in a tea-rose silk, with white lace and opal jewellery, and so sent her to join her guests. After dinner the party assembled in the drawing-room, where the evening was passed in anxious suspense. All were secretly looking forward to the hour when the bridegroom and his best man would arrive, if they should come that night; but no one spoke of it. All knew that the Washington stage-coach would reach Wildeville at seven o'clock; that if Colonel Fitzgerald and Mr. Rowley should come by that conveyance, they would procure horses at the Wildeville Hotel, and ride to the Summit, and so reach home by nine.

As the hour approached, the anxiety of the party arose to breathless suspense, yet no one spoke of it! —no one dared to do so—not even Pat.—while the lady most vitally concerned kept a dignified silence on that subject. They talked of fashion, dress, the weather, the neighbours, of anything else but that which occupied their thoughts.

A storm was rising, too! A storm in the mountains was no trifling peril to be encountered by travellers, and if Colonel Fitzgerald and Mr. Rowley had arrived at Wildeville by the seven o'clock coach, they must then be on their way to the Summit, and sure to meet the storm. The only hope was that the coach might have made good time, and they might have started immediately on swift horses, and so might reach the Summit before the fury of the elements should burst upon them. But this was a slight hope.

At half-past eight a horse was heard to gallop up to the gate. All the young people sprang to their feet except Geraldine, who sat in silence. But presently the door opened and a servant appeared, to say a messenger had ridden over from Hill Top Hall, with a message from Miss Rowley to say that General Slaughter was too ill to admit of her leaving him that day. The youthful party sank back in their seats, disappointed. Geraldine seemed about to faint, but soon rallied.

The storm burst with fury. The young party did

not separate and go to bed. They remained in the drawing-room, except Geraldine, who sat apart, wounded in spirit, sorrowful, and indignant.

The long hours of that terrible night passed slowly and tediously. All who had been anxiously looking for the arrival of the travellers hoped that, if they had reached Wildeville by the seven o'clock coach, they had not set out thence on horseback for the Summit, but had put up at the hotel to wait for the storm to subside.

It was after midnight before the fury of that tempest had expended itself. Then the wearied girls arose from their crouching attitudes, and with thanksgivings that the storm was over, bade their hostess good-night, and separated to their rooms to get what sleep they could, in the interval before the morning. When all had left the room, Patricia turned back and looked at her cousin. Geraldine was seated in the same chair that she had occupied during the night.

"Gerry, won't you go to bed?"

"No."

"Then neither will I," said Patricia, drawing a foot-stool to the side of her cousin and seating herself on it.

"You had better retire to rest, Patricia."

"And leave you here alone? I won't! I'm not that sort of fellow!"

"Then do as you please," said Geraldine, wearily.

"I say, Gerry, don't bother about *them!* They're all right. You may depend they got to Wildeville last night, but they *couldn't* brave the storm in the mountains, and I don't blame them. They will be here early this morning. Why, *I'm* not bothered, because I don't believe any harm has happened to them. If I thought any harm had happened to my Sally, I should cry my eyes out!"

"Patricia, if you must stay here, try to keep silence! *Don't* talk. I cannot bear it!"

"Well, I won't. What did I tell you? There they are now, and it is not yet daylight," exclaimed the girl, as the sound of horses' hoofs was heard galloping into the yard.

"It is Gerald! It *can* be no one else at this hour," exclaimed Geraldine, thrown off her guard by joy.

"And not a servant in the establishment waking up at this unholy hour to open the door. I must run and let him in myself," cried Patricia, rushing out into the hall.

Bolts shot back, locks turned under the fingers of the girl, the door flew open and Mr. Sallust Rowley almost fell into the arms of Patricia Fitzgerald.

CHAPTER V.

A FEARFUL MYSTERY.

"SALLY! Oh, I am so glad you have come. Though you needn't have butted me over for all that," cried Patricia, recovering the balance Mr. Sallust Rowley's impetuous entrance had nearly overset. "But where is Colonel Fitzgerald! Why doesn't he come in?" she inquired.

"Don't ask me, Pat., that's a brick," cried the young man.

"Why, Sallust Rowley, what is the matter with you? You look as white as a sheet and you tremble like a leaf. What on earth ails you?" demanded Patricia.

"Don't ask me, Pat., that's a trump," exclaimed Sallust.

"I *will* ask you, and you shall tell me. What have you been up to? You look as if you expect to be shot next minute? Have you slain a man in your wrath, and a young man to your hurting?" persisted Patricia.

The youth turned paler, but he did not reply.

"What in the deuce ails you, boy? *Have* you robbed a bank?" demanded Patricia.

"No; but I dread to meet *her!*" exclaimed Sallust.

"To meet *who?*" cried Patricia, impatiently.

"*Her*—Gerry. What *can* I say to her?" he groaned.

"If you have anything to say to *me*, Mr. Sallust

Rowley, you had better say it at once," suggested a calm voice, as Geraldine Fitzgerald confronted him. Sallust Rowley drew back aghast.

"Why is not Colonel Fitzgerald with you? Where did you leave him?" inquired Geraldine.

"Don't ask me, Ger—Miss Fitzgerald, I mean. And don't look at me so. Your eyes go through me like a knife. Don't please, that's a brick—I mean a lady! Let me go in and rest myself. I am tired almost to death, indeed I am."

Sallust Rowley forgot his politeness, pushed past the ladies, entered the drawing-room and threw himself in the arm-chair lately occupied by Geraldine. They followed him—Geraldine speechless in astonishment and indignation—Patricia noisy with fright and anxiety.

"Sally!" she exclaimed, "you talk and act like a lunatic, and I am not agoing to stand it—there. You shall tell us what you mean by your mysterious reserve."

"I can't tell you, Patricia. Don't ask me—that's a brick!" cried the victim.

"I *will* ask you, and I will make you tell, too, you red-headed ape. Why did not Colonel Fitzgerald keep his appointment and come down with you?"

"I can't tell you. Indeed, goodness knows I can't," whimpered Sallust.

"Where did you leave him?"

"What's the use of asking me, if I can't tell you? It only torments me and enrages you, for nothing."

"*I'll* torment you. Since Colonel Fitzgerald has not come down to-night, *when* is he coming down? This morning? This evening? *When?*" persisted the girl.

"I cannot tell you," persevered the youth.

"Has anything happened to him? If so, what is it? What has happened to him?" continued Patricia.

"I cannot tell you," repeated Sallust. "And I *will* not! There now, Miss Patricia. I would not—not if I were to be put on the rack and screwed limb from limb."

"Wish I had the power to do it. I'd put you to the test. I'd screw you," muttered Patricia, "but never mind. Uncle Fitzgerald will make you tell, I'll bet!"

"No, he won't, neither. And if he *should*, you would wish he *hadn't*, now mind you. If ever there were a

case where ignorance is bliss, this is one. But he won't, *I'll* bet. I shall be off from this place in ten minutes. I am going away. I am going to leave the country," he exclaimed. "I only dropped in to tell you to put off the wedding-guests as well as you can. For there can be no wedding without the bridegroom, and the bridegroom won't put in an appearance."

Geraldine Fitzgerald stood silent, with her hands resting on the back of her chair and her eyes fixed on the face of the speaker. Now she addressed him in a tone of authority.

"Has he sent by you any message as to his failure to keep his appointment here?"

"No, ma'am, he has not sent by me any message as to his failure to keep his appointment here; nor would I, under the circumstances, have delivered it. I have answered three questions. Now, the rack shall not wring another word of information from me on that subject!" exclaimed Sallust Rowley, grimly.

"It is enough. I do not wish to ask you another question," muttered Geraldine. "Colonel Fitzgerald is alive and well, and yet he comes not to keep his engagement on his wedding-day, and sends no explanation!"

And with these words she sallied out of the room.

"There, you little villain, see what you have done!" exclaimed Patrica, in a fury.

"Upon my soul, I didn't do anything!" pleaded Sallust.

"You have said too little or too much!"

"I didn't mean to say anything, but she compelled me!"

"Better you had kept silence than said what you did!"

"I wanted to keep silence, but she would not let me!"

"Since you were forced to speak, it would have been better that you had told the worst, than to leave such vague horrors to be inferred from your reserve," said Patricia.

"Ay, that's because you don't know anything about it. But, I say *I* must be off——"

"Stop! You told your cousin that Colonel Fitzgerald is alive and well, and yet sends no message explanatory of his strange conduct. Now answer me this question, which I think could never have occurred to Geraldine, or she would have asked it: *Is Colonel Fitzgerald at liberty?*"

"Now look here, Miss Pat.! I see what you are up to. You want to get at the case by a method that examining detectives call *exclusion*, and by finding out what *is not*, to discover what *is*. I shall answer no more questions. Good-bye, Pat.! I'm sorry to leave you, but the best of friends must part," said the young man, taking his hat.

"Stop! You shall not go until you have seen my uncle, and given *him* some explanation, if you will not give it to any one else!" cried Patricia, ringing the bell.

"What is the use of your doing that? There is not a servant out of bed at this time of the morning," said Sallust.

"True! I will go to uncle's room myself!" cried Patricia. Before she knocked at her uncle's door she remembered she must not alarm him, so she knocked softly.

"Who is that?" inquired the voice of Mr. Fitzgerald.

"It is I, Uncle—Pat."

"What do you want, my dear?"

"Only to tell you that Sallust has arrived, and that there is some delay in the coming of Cousin Gerald."

"Delay in the coming of Gerald! Is he ill?" demanded Mr. Fitzgerald in anxious tones.

"Oh, no; he is quite well, I assure you; but something has occurred to delay his arrival."

"*What* has occurred? Can't you speak, Patricia?"

"I do not know, uncle. Sallust refuses to explain to me or to Geraldine, but perhaps he will to you."

"Will Gerald be here this evening in time for the wedding?"

"I do not know, sir; Sallust can explain. Shall I send him to you?"

"Yes; tell him to come up at once. All this is strange and disagreeable!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzgerald.

Patricia flew down stairs to intercept the departure of the visitor; but when she reached the drawing-room she

found that visitor gone. She tore open the front door, only in time to hear the ringing hoofs of the rider's horse, as he galloped away by the bridle-path that led down to the turnpike road leading to Wildeville.

"He'll break his neck, mean scamp! It may save Jack Ketch some trouble. Fled like a criminal and a coward, rather than meet Mr. Fitzgerald with any explanation of this strange mystery!" muttered Patricia.

"What *can* be the matter?" she asked herself. "What *can* have happened to Gerald Fitzgerald to keep him from his appointment with his promised bride upon her wedding-day? If he were dead, or ill, one could understand it; but he is well. His conduct is incomprehensible. It is a great mystery. And it is said that where there is mystery there is always guilt. But guilt in connection with Gerald Fitzgerald's name? Impossible!"

As Patricia re-entered the drawing-room she found a servant opening the shutters.

"Did you see Mr. Sallust Rowley this morning?" she inquired.

"Yes, Miss. He left his horse in the stable and borrowed a fresh one, *Flash o' Lightning*, and he says as he will leave it at the Wildeville stables to be sent back here, and we can keep his horse until called for," replied the man.

"That is cool, upon my honour! I wonder if he thinks they keep a livery stable here!" muttered Pat. to herself.

Mr. Fitzgerald's old body-servant entered the room, saying: "Please, Miss, old Marster say how he is waiting for Mr. Sallust."

"Tell your master that Mr. Sallust has left the house. Or, stay! Is Mr. Fitzgerald up and dressed?"

"Yes, Miss. I jest done put him in his easy-chair."

"Then I will go to him myself. Go tell him so," said Patricia. The servant led the way to the chamber of his master. Patricia found her uncle seated by the front window, with his gouty foot on its rest.

"Oh, is it you, my dear? Where is Sallust?" said the old gentleman.

The young girl sat down and answered cautiously:

"Sallust has gone, uncle. He had already gone when I returned to the drawing-room."

"But, that is strange," said the old gentleman. And he questioned Patricia closely as to all that had passed in her interview with the mysterious visitor. Patricia answered with all the discretion of which she was mistress, and found that the invalid was not so much upset by the news, or the lack of news, as she had expected to find him.

"It is all very strange; but Gerald is in the right. It is probably some other man's interest or honour that is involved, and Gerald cannot explain without some breach of trust. I hope Gerald will be able to reach here this evening before the hour appointed for the wedding ceremony. But whatever the mystery may be, my confidence in my son's honour is immovable," cried the old gentleman.

"So is mine, uncle," added Patricia, earnestly.

"I thank you, my dear. But what does Geraldine say?" he anxiously inquired.

"She says very little, uncle," Patricia replied.

"I fear that she is vexed."

"She did not say so."

"Oh, no, she would never say so! It will be all right when Gerald comes this evening! If he does not know how to soothe a sulky sweetheart, he is no true Fitzgerald! There, you need not wait. Tell them to send me up my cup of chocolate." So dismissed, Patricia went down stairs, and gave her uncle's order to the housekeeper.

She passed out of the front-door and upon the terrace over-hanging the river, to walk there for a while, to rid herself of the anxious thoughts inspired by the strange demeanour of her cousin, Sallust Rowley.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PURSUERS.

WHILE on the terrace Patricia saw four strange men gallop up to the house and dismount. Grooms, that were in attendance to wait on visitors, came up and took their horses.

The men walked up the terrace steps. They stood on the terrace looking about them, and then the oldest man, who seemed to be the leader, came up to Patricia, and said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss, but we wish to see the master of the house."

"I do not think that you can see Mr. Fitzgerald," said Patricia; "his health is in a critical condition. He is confined to his chamber with gout and is forbidden by the doctor to see any stranger or to have any excitement. Will not I do as well?"

"Scarcely. Is there no man about the house, besides the master, that we can see?" inquired the stranger.

"There is no one here, except the master and the men-servants. I am afraid you will have to confide your business to me," said Patricia, gathering courage.

"Well, Miss, it is not a pleasant thing to say to a young lady. We have a warrant here for the arrest of one Sallust Rowley," said the stranger.

"A warrant! For the arrest of Sallust Rowley! Good Heaven!" exclaimed Patricia.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss. We do not intend to hurt him. Where shall we find the young man?" inquired the officer.

"I do not know. I do not know where he is; but for Heaven's sake tell me—what has he done?"

"It is not necessary to go into that, my lady. Tell us where we can find the young man, so that we can make

the arrest without causing a disturbance in a gentleman's house. Come—where is Mr. Sallust Rowley?"

"I do not know. He is not here," said Patricia.

"Come, Miss. We know that he crossed Haddon's Ferry at midnight last night, and rode here, reaching the house this morning. We know this for a fact, so if you do not give him up quietly we shall be obliged to search the premises," said the officer.

"Oh, for the love of Mercy, do not *think* of searching the house! It would kill my uncle, in his critical state. And you would not like to cause the death of an old man, would you?" exclaimed Patricia, wringing her hands.

"Of course not; but it is *you*, my dear lady, who are endangering your uncle's safety, by refusing to give up the man we want, and compelling us to make a disturbance by searching the house. Show us the man, and we will take him quietly and go about our business."

"But I do not know where he is. I only know that he is not here," persisted Patricia, in great distress.

"Oh, tut, tut, tut!" exclaimed the sheriff's officer.

"But I speak the truth. Do you suppose that I am capable of telling a falsehood, even to shelter him?" demanded Patricia.

"I beg pardon, Miss; but what are we to think?"

"I will tell you all I know about it. Sallust Rowley *did* arrive here early this morning. He stayed about half an hour, but seemed during that time to be in haste to be off again. At the end of that time he went off, leaving his horse here and taking a fresh one. He has been gone nearly an hour. I do not mind giving you this information, because it will do him no harm, as he has made good his escape, and it will prevent your disturbing an invalid gentleman by searching the house. If you doubt me, and think that my story needs confirmation, you can go to the stables and question the coachman and groom." The men exchanged a few words with each other, and the elder said:

"We will go to the stable and hear what the people there have to say, before we search the house. If they put us on the right track, we need not return here again to molest you, Miss." And with these words the officer rode to the stable, followed by his companions.

"Well," said Patricia, "I would have been worse than a traitor to have given them any information, if it had not been to save uncle from excitement, and if I had not known that Sallust had got beyond *their* pursuit! But what *has* that wretched boy been up to! And is it *this* business that Gerald Fitzgerald is mixed up with? I forgot to ask them. Or, rather, it never once entered my head to ask them. I shall not say a word to uncle about this visit, and I must caution the servants not to do so. How glad I am the girls are all sleeping late this morning after their restless night, I hope they won't wake up until noon. If they don't I will not have them called. And this is the wedding-day. We have to think of the wedding-guests who will soon be assembling. What can we tell them? Then uncle feels so sure Gerald will be here on time, while I know he will not be. Or, even if, by a miracle, he should come, his first groomsman will not be in attendance. What a complication. If only something would happen that everybody could understand, to put off the wedding, anything that we could explain; anything but this mystery with its flavour of guilt. Oh, dear, life is a great bore!" sighed Patricia.

Aunt Hetty, the old housekeeper, met her, saying:

"De breakfas' is all ready and sp'ilin', Miss Pat.; but none ob de young ladies is down yet. What is to be done?"

"Nothing. Let them rest. They were up nearly all night, Het. They were frightened by the storm, and they would not go to bed. Has uncle had his breakfast?"

"La, yes, honey, long ago; all de breakfas' he ebber takes—his cup o' chocolate and bit o' dry toas."

"Well, you may bring me a cup of coffee here, and put the breakfast back until the young ladies rise," said Patricia.

"Berry well; jes' as you say," answered the woman.

"Het. Has any message come from Miss Maxima Rowley to-day? Any news of General Slaughter's condition?"

"No, not since last night, when word come as he was much wuss, an' Miss Maxima couldn't leave him."

"Yes, I know; that will do, Het. You need not wait."

"Yes, honey; I bring your cup of coffee immediate," said the woman, finally retreating.

She soon re-appeared with a breakfast arranged on a waiter. Pat. disposed of a couple of rolls, a fried perch, and an egg. Then Het removed the waiter, and Patricia began to walk the floor until she was startled by the sound of horses' hoofs galloping past. She ran to the window and saw the sheriff's officers riding away.

"Let them go. They will never catch my Sally now! But what *has* the unlucky chap been up to, to have the sheriff's officers in pursuit of him?" she groaned.

The sound of the sheriff's horses' feet had scarcely died away, before another horse was heard galloping to the house.

It was a negro horseman, who threw himself from his horse and ran up the steps and knocked at the door. Pat. rushed to the door and tore it open.

"What is the matter *now?* What news have *you* brought?" she inquired of the agitated messenger.

"Berry bad news, Miss. I 's sorry to say Old Marse Gen'ral is gone, Miss—passed away a little arter midnight dis mornin', Miss."

"Oh, thank Heaven!" fervently ejaculated Patricia.

"Miss!" exclaimed the messenger, looking aghast.

"Oh, I didn't mean that. I am *very* sorry for the poor old gentleman!" amended Patricia.

"She's 'fused in her mine, along of de grief. I oughtn't to abroke it to her so suddint," said the messenger.

"But it will *put off the wedding*, won't it?" cried Patricia.

"In course it *must*, Miss; which was the berry reason why Miss Maxima sent me off in sich hot haste to tell you; 'case, she says, it wouldn't be decent to have no marrying nor giving in marriage going on wid such a near delation ob de family layin' dead in his house. So she sent me off quick to stop it."

"Did Miss Maxima write?"

"No; she hadn't no time to write. She sent me off soon's ebber the breaf was out'n de ole marster's body, so you dem here would have a chance to send round de news and stop de weddin'ers from comin' to de house ob

mournin'. I couldn't see Marse Fitzgerald, to 'liver ob my message?"

"No, you could not. He is not well, and must not be disturbed. I will take him the message. Get some breakfast in the kitchen. You must be hungry after your ride."

"Dat's so, Miss Pat. Dis ole nigger's front waistcoat is gone clear to his backbone along of emptiness."

Once more Patricia sought the chamber of her uncle. She found him sitting in his easy-chair at the front window, with his afflicted leg in its rest.

"Well, my dear, have you heard anything from Maxima this morning?" inquired the old gentleman.

"Yes, uncle," replied Patricia.

"Well, my love, what does she say? Is the General any better? Will she be here in time for the wedding?"

"The wedding will have to be put off, dear uncle."

"What! Is he so ill as all that?"

"He is gone, uncle. A messenger has just come from Hill Top Hall to bring the news."

"What! Gone, is he? Well, this *is* sudden! Yes, old as he is—thirty years older than I am, my dear—it *is* sudden! Death seems sudden. As you say, the wedding must be put off. Where is Geraldine?"

"She has not yet left her room. She lost a great deal of rest last night, and is trying to take some this morning, I suppose," said Patricia.

"Then, in the absence of Gerald and Geraldine, I must ask you to take orders in this crisis. Send off as many men as our stables can mount, with messages to all our guests, informing them of the death of General Slaughter and the postponement of the wedding. Send them in different directions, and give each man a list of the people he is to call on. Can you do this, my dear child?"

"Certainly I can. I will set about it immediately!" exclaimed Patricia, as she hurried from the room.

"Oh, my good gracious me, what a fortunate thing! I can't help feeling so much relieved to think that *now* we have a good excuse that every one can understand for putting off the wedding that couldn't come on," she said to herself, as she entered the breakfast-room and rang the bell for the housekeeper.

"Young ladies ready for breakfast yet?" inquired Aunt Het, as she came in.

"No; but never mind them now. Have you seen Saturn from Hill Top?"

"I done seen Satan! Any sponsors in babtism to name a Christian baby arter de debbil, and call him Satan! I don't believe in no sich doin's," grumbled Aunt Het.

"Well, but you have seen him and heard his news?"

"Yes, honey. Ole Marse Gen'al Slaughter gone. Nothin' but what might 'a' been spected dese twenty years or more. Why, honey, dat ole man is ober ninety year ob age! 'Deed, dear knows, ef it had 'a' been *me* lef' so long, I done been affeared as de good Lord had forgot to call me, an' I might keep on libbin' till I dried up and blowed away! But he's gone! Ah! but he *was* a saint on dis yeth. We dem have speri-enced a great loss in him, rest his soul!" sighed Het.

"And now you know, Het., that the wedding, which was to have been celebrated to-night, must be put off," said the more matter-of-fact Patricia.

"Yes. All is wanity and wexation ob de sperrits! Little do us feel like makin' merry wid music and dancin', wid sich a good ole man laying dead in his house and gone to glory," said Het.

"I want you to send the head groom to me for orders. We shall have to dispatch messengers in every direction to stop the wedding guests from coming," said Patricia.

"Yes, honey. I go send him right straight up to you," sighed Het., hurrying away from the room.

Presently the old white-headed groom entered, bowing respectfully.

"Domitian, we have had grave news this morning. General Slaughter has departed this life," explained the lady.

The old servant bowed solemnly.

"The wedding must be deferred in honour of this event. Your master desires that you have every horse saddled, and a man mounted on each, to dispatch with the news to our friends to prevent their coming here this evening. As the men mount let them ride up to

the house, to take orders from me. Hasten, Domitian, and do your errand."

The old man bowed, and left the room.

Patricia passed into her uncle's study, and wrote out a list of names for each messenger's route. When she had completed her task, she went out on the terrace to give them to her messengers. She found a dozen men mounted awaiting her orders. They rode up one by one, received each a list of names, which she read over to them, having to trust rather to their memory than to their knowledge of letters. Having dispatched all her couriers, she returned to the house.

She was met in the hall by all the bride-maids, who had gathered around her and greeted her with girlish delight.

"Oh, isn't it a glorious morning after the storm!" exclaimed Horatia Rowley, the sister of Sallust.

"A lovely day for a wedding," chimed in May Faire, the orphan schoolmate of Geraldine Fitzgerald.

"Blessed is the bride that the sun shines on," quoted dark-eyed Anna Condé, the friend of Horatia.

"Yes, it is a glorious morning after the storm, and a lovely day for a wedding, and blessed is the bride that the sun shines on. You are all right. Only there will be no wedding and no bride!" exclaimed Patricia.

The news fell like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

"No wedding and no bride!" exclaimed Horatia.

"What on earth has happened?" cried May Faire.

"Has the gout flown to Mr. Fitzgerald's stomach at last?" anxiously inquired Anna Condé.

"Is General Slaughter much worse?" asked Horatia.

"General Slaughter died last night. A messenger brought the news this morning. Couriers have been dispatched to carry the news to our distant friends, and save them the trouble of coming to a wedding that is not going to be celebrated."

"Oh, what a shocking thing!" exclaimed Anna.

"What a terrible disappointment!" cried Horatia.

"What does poor dear Geraldine say about it?" inquired May.

"'Poor dear Geraldine' don't know it yet. She has not left her room, and I do not mean that she shall be disturbed. And now we have nothing to do but to

eat our breakfast. It has been waiting long enough until I don't know which is most spoiled—the breakfast or the cook's temper," said Patricia.

When they were gathered around the table, where a tempting meal had been laid, the young people could not eat or drink for chattering.

"And to think Colonel Fitzgerald and his groomsmen will arrive here to-day ignorant of all that has happened! Oh, won't it be a heavy blow to a bridegroom?" cried May Faire.

"Horrible!" chimed in Horatia and Anna.

In the midst of their chattering the door swung open and Geraldine Fitzgerald entered the room. She was clothed in white. There was not a speck of colour about her dress. Her face was pale, and in contrast to the blackness of her hair it seemed as white as her dress. She bowed in silence to her friends, advanced and took her place at the table. Her presence fell like a damper on the flow of girlish talk.

"You have heard what has happened?" said Patricia.

"Yes, I have heard what has happened. Desirée told me when she came to dress me. Give me some strong coffee, Patricia," said Geraldine, with stolid calmness.

The young girl handed the cup of coffee. She knew it was not the death of General Slaughter, nor yet the postponement of her wedding, that had stricken all the colour from Geraldine's face; but the mysterious absence and more mysterious silence of her destined bridegroom, that had fallen like a death-blow on the beautiful bride-elect.

As soon as the breakfast was over the young bridemaids took a reluctant leave and departed. Patricia was left alone in the sitting-room with her cousin.

"Tell me now frankly, Geraldine, would you prefer that I too should go, or that I should stay here with you?"

"You must go, Patricia, and I shall go with you. I will not pass another night or day under the roof of Colonel Fitzgerald," said the young lady, resolutely.

"Geraldine! Oh, don't talk in that way. Wait and see. Gerald may come this day and answer for himself," exclaimed Patricia, in alarm.

"Or, he may not come. I will not wait his lordly pleasure," grimly replied the young lady.

"He may still write and explain, dear Geraldine. Wait until the boy comes from the post-office, to see whether there is a letter for you," pleaded Patricia.

"I WILL NOT wait the arrogant pleasure of Colonel Fitzgerald!" exclaimed Geraldine. "I have ordered the carriage, and we shall leave this place within an hour."

"Here comes Bob from the post-office!" exclaimed Patricia, flying out to seize the mail-bag.

She flew back into the parlour, opening the bag as she came. Geraldine looked on with a haughty glance, and "lips that scarce their scorn forbore."

"There! I told you so. A letter from Colonel Fitzgerald for you! It is the only one in the bag, too! Take it and repent your haste!" exclaimed Patricia, throwing an envelope into the lap of her cousin. Geraldine commanded herself as only a proud woman could have done. She opened it deliberately, and read —first to herself and then aloud—to Patricia. The letter was without date or signature. It contained but these words:——

"*Geraldine, trust me in this day as I should trust you all days!*"

"I WILL NOT trust him, since he does not confide in me!" exclaimed Geraldine, throwing the note from her. "I have trusted him too long and too fatally! I suffered myself to be brought here to his house, as a bondmaid to her master! And my humility has been repaid with treachery and contempt. I shall leave this house to-day. I shall go with you, Patricia, to the home of your uncle, my other good guardian! I thank Heaven I have that other guardian for a refuge in this time of trouble! I will stay at Greenwood until Christmas, when I shall come of age. Then I will take up my abode at one of my own manors. But never again will I enter the house of the traitor Gerald Fitzgerald!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FERRY-MAN'S RETURN.

WE must return to Gertrude, whom we left alone in the old ferry-house waiting anxiously for the appearance of her grandfather. Long she sat there after her eccentric guest had left her. She was startled by the striking of the clock.

It struck four. A shiver passed through her frame. She opened the front door and looked out.

She looked across the narrow river, to the dark precipices on the other side. She glanced towards the landing. It was deserted. There was not a living soul to be seen. The party who had been shouting 'boat!' for the last two hours had gone off in discouragement.

"They have gone down to the next ferry; seven miles off. The young man may get clear away. I wonder how he fell into trouble—and I wonder what keeps my dear grandfather so long?" she added, as she turned her head to look up the bridle-path that led through the mountain-pass, and to the plateau called Hill Top. The rain-storm of the night had swollen all the mountain-streams, that dashed down the rocks with velocity, tumbling into the Wilde.

While Gertrude was gazing on this devastation, her grandfather stood beside her. She started, and looked at him with a low exclamation of surprise. He seemed to have aged ten years since she had seen him on the night previous. His face was pale, and his eyes sunken.

"Dear Grand., I am so glad to see you back at last," she exclaimed; then growing graver, she inquired: "Our neighbour, General Slaughter?"

"Gone," answered the old man.

"Gone!" echoed the girl, solemnly.

Gabriel Haddon bowed his head in silence, and then—

"Are you up so early, my little True, or have you been watching through the night?" he inquired.

"I have been up all night, dear Grand. And you, too, have lost your rest, I fear."

"I have not been at ease, child."

"I am sorry for that; but come in and lie down. I will get you a cup of coffee directly," she urged.

"Yes, we will go in; but Jess can get my coffee, I want to talk with you," sighed the old man.

"Jess has not yet returned, grandpa," she explained.

"What! and you have been alone all night? I suppose that is the reason why you did not go to bed," said Gabriel Haddon.

"No, grandpa, I did not go to bed, not because I was alone, but because I had company!" answered Gertrude.

"Company?" echoed the ferryman.

"Yes, Grand., a traveller who came to the steps on the other side of the river and called for the boat. I went and brought him across. He stayed until the storm was over, and went away an hour ago. And there is something about it I am afraid you will not like. He was soaking wet, through and through. I lent him a suit of your clothes, and he wore them away, leaving his own and sixty dollars to pay for yours—three times as much as they are worth, dear Grand.; and I could not help his leaving so much; he *would* do it: but you can save it, and when you see him again you can make him take it back. Can you not?"

"Yes, my dear," the ferry-man answered. He scarcely heard or understood the question. He did not inquire the name, age, or description of the stranger who had spent the night with his granddaughter in the ferry-house. In his absorption in some other hidden subject, he seemed not to have realized that there was anything unusual in the occurrence.

"Now if you will lie down and rest, dear Grand., I will make your coffee," said Gertrude, kissing his forehead.

She passed into the adjoining kitchen.

Gertrude took a pail and passed into the yard and through the gate to the precipice, whence from a fissure in the rocks sprang a fountain of water. She filled her

pail at this spring and returned to the house to fill her tea-kettle. As she entered the kitchen, the black form of Jessie Bell met her gaze.

"Oh, Aunt Jess, I'm so glad you have come home. Grandfather has returned very tired. I think he was up all night with General Slaughter," said Gertrude.

"Yes, chile. That ole sinner is gone at last! Yes! 'In the midst of death we are in life.' 'Here to-morrow and gone to-day,' as the saying is. Well, hope he's better off, dough I doubts it. Dunno how ole marse ever could 'a' forgibed that ole rip all he done to him. 'Spose we must all forgib dough, ef we wants to be forgibben. I'd forgib too, if I was 'pelled to do it; but 'deed I'd want to have him punished *good* 'fore ever I forgib him—'deed me. 'Whatsoever a man reap that also shall he sow!'" exclaimed old Jess, as she set about getting the breakfast.

"What time did the old general pass away, Aunt Jess?" inquired Gertrude.

"What time de debbil come to fetch de old raff, you mean?—you hear dat last orful big clap o' thunder and blaze o' lightnin' like de last day had come and the yeth had busted up in flames?"

"Yes, I should think I ought to," said Gertrude.

"Well, honey, he went right off in dat clap o' thunder—'deed he—which if dere was any doubt which a way he went, dat might settle it."

"Oh, Aunt Jess! *Poor* General Slaughter!" said Gertrude.

"What you say poor Gen'al Slaughter for? What *call* you got to pity he?" demanded old Jess.

"Oh, Aunt Jess! He is gone now. Nobody has a good word for him. We ought not to speak ill of him, now he cannot answer for himself," said Gertrude.

"Better say poor granddaddy! You dunno what he done to ole Marse, I reckon," retorted old Jess.

"No, I do not. What did he do?"

"Ax ole Marse—do dat. I ain't got no call to tell you. You ax ole Marse what turned his hair gray in one week. Ax him *dat!* Ax him why he never got married. Ax him *dat!* No, you better not ax him neither, come to think of it. 'Least mended, soonest

said,' for you might hurt his feelin's. But as to forgibbin dat ole Slaughter, dat ole 'sassin, dat ole kidnapper, ole cutthroat—I jes as leab forgib de debbil—*dere!*" exclaimed Jess.

"Aunt Jess, I *know* that my dear grandfather has forgiven him, and has consoled his dying hour. *He* could bear no malice against a dying man," said Gertrude.

"Well, den, I *kin;* and I'm glad as dere's somefin' I kin do as ole Marse can't. I kin bear malice, and I won't forgib him 'less I knowed he was well punished. Ef he was punished *good*, den mebby I might forgib him—'deed me! 'Spects de debbil will get me for my onforgibben sperrit. Can't help it ef he do. 'What can't be 'dured *must* be cured.' But de wust ob goin' to de debbil would be de bad company it fetches one into. Now ef I was to go to de debbil, I should have to 'sociate long o' Gen'al Slaughter and sich, for I's dead sure he's gone dere—'deed he!"

Gertrude turned away with a sigh, and went into the parlour to set the table. There she saw her grandfather still reclining in the elbow-chair, by the window.

"Why, dear Grand. I thought you had gone in to lie down until breakfast was ready," she said, taking his hand, and gazing tenderly in his face.

"I forgot, my dear, I forgot," he breathed.

"Won't you lie down now? There will be still ten or fifteen minutes for you to rest before it is put upon the table," she urged, with affectionate solicitude.

"No matter, my dear. I shall do as I am. Do not mind me, Gertrude," said Gabriel Haddon.

In a few moments the morning meal was laid upon the table. The sun now appeared over the top of the mountain, sending his beams through the window into the parlour of the ferry-house.

"Come, dear Grand, a strong cup of coffee will do you good," said Gertrude, placing his chair at the table and taking her own seat behind the tray.

Gabriel Haddon sat down, asked the blessing, and drank the cup of coffee she had poured out for him, and ate a part of an omelette and a part of a waffle. While he was at breakfast the sound of horses' feet were heard galloping to the gate, where they stopped. In a few

moments steps were approaching the house, and a rap sounded on the front door. The ferry-man arose and opened to the visitor—a messenger from Hill Top Hall.

"Ah, Saturn, my man, is this you? You are wanting the boat, of course," said the ferry-man.

"Yes, marster. I am going to Wildeville to fetch the undertaker, and would like you to put me across immediate, if possible," replied the messenger.

"Certainly, I will go this moment," said the ferry-man.

And he took his hat and walked to the boat-house, followed by the negro. Gertrude, assisted by old Jess, cleared the table and put the room in order. At the end of half an hour the ferry-man returned. The routine work seemed to have broken the spell that bound him; brought him to himself. He found the sitting-room in order and his grand-daughter seated at her work-stand, sewing.

"What are you making, child?" he inquired.

"Making nothing, dear Grand; only putting new cuffs on your shirt-sleeves," she answered.

"Put it up, True, and draw your chair here close to mine. I must talk to you," said Gabriel Haddon.

Gertrude folded the shirt and laid it away in her drawer, with her needle and thread. She set the stand in the corner, and drew her chair to the old man's side. They formed a fine picture, as they sat there by the window; the reverend-looking old man, clothed in his home-spun suit, reclining in his elbow-chair, his fine face framed in by his flowing silver hair and beard, seeming like some patriarch of old; and the maiden in her home dress of blue and white, seated on a low chair at his feet, her hands clasped on his knee, her dark hair rippling back from her clear, pale face, her dark eyes raised reverently to his.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD FERRY-MAN'S STORY.

"LISTEN to me, my True," said the ferry-man. "I told you—did I not?—that every crisis in my long life had, by some unaccountable coincidence occurred on the fifteenth day of July, and at intervals of fifteen years?"

"Yes, dear Grand."

"I told you also that last night, being the fifteenth of July, and fifteen years from the last important event in my life, was another critical epoch, and that by inference drawn from all precedence, as well as by the foreboding of my prophetic soul, I expected another crisis."

"You did, indeed, grandpa."

"My child, the crisis came, even darker, more terrible, more agonizing than I could have foreshadowed!"

"Oh, grandpa! Now Heaven forbid that any evil should have come to you or should threaten you in your age."

"Amen, my child, and for your sake more than my own. But that you may understand what has happened, my dear, I must refer briefly to my own early life."

"Yes, tell me about yourself. I have so longed to know all about you," she murmured, as she took his hand in her own—"people tell so many tales of you, Grand; but all are good, none evil."

"And what do they say of the old man, my little True? I do not know, for the subject of a neighbourhood gossip is the last to hear it. But I can guess they call me a lunatic, among other things, my dear," said Gabriel Haddon.

Gertrude was pleased to see even so grave a smile upon his sad lips, and she hastened to reply:

"No; I never heard of any one saying that of you.

Some people call you a saint, and some a prophet, and some a seer. Many speak vaguely of a great misfortune that you suffered in your young days and a great sacrifice that you made, and others describe how, in one week, by the black magic of sorrow, the young ferryman's golden hair was turned to silver. Oh, dear grandpa, could this have been true?"

"Not very far from true, my child."

"Tell me all about it! Open your heart to me. Not in idle curiosity I ask you, dearest, but in affection and sympathy," murmured Gertrude.

"I know it, my little True. I know your faithful heart as I know my own. Child! I have lived all my life in this cottage, working in the garden and plying the ferry-boats. You may judge that my career has not been an eventful one; it has been a monotonous one, with the exception of three striking episodes."

"Ah, but those episodes!" murmured Gertrude.

"Yes, those episodes!" continued the ferry-man. "Well, my child, to begin with my natal day, I was born on the fifteenth of July, sixty years ago."

"Yes, I knew that, dear," said the maiden, quietly.

"I was the sole surviving child of a family of seven boys and girls. I grew to be a studious lad, fonder of books than of the ferry-boats, and my father, pleased at the turn my mind was taking, sent me to the village school at Wildeville. This accounts, Gertrude, for my being better read than some of my wealthier neighbours," added the old man.

"Grandpa, everybody about here thinks you are learned."

"I know enough to feel sure that I am very ignorant, my child. On the fifteenth of July, and my fifteenth birthday, the first great sorrow of my life fell on me. My father, a vigorous man of fifty-five, was drowned whilst crossing the ferry in a storm, thus leaving my mother to the care of his only son.

"On that dark day, my dear Gertrude, I seemed to have passed from boyhood to manhood, with no interval of youth. On that day I laid aside my student's habits, and took up the burden of life for good. On that eventful day, I found a pure white lily," added the old man.

"A white lily?" echoed Gertrude, softly.

"Lily Vale, the granddaughter of General Slaughter, and the heiress of Hill Top Hall and Forest Lodge. She had lost both her parents in her infancy, and was the ward as well as the heiress of her grandfather. She was six years old when I first saw her, and the loveliest vision of beauty that ever blessed the eyes of man. She came to the ferry that day like a little princess, attended by her retinue—her governess, her maid and her footman—to have a row on the river before the sun should grow too hot. For the morning after the storm was very calm and pleasant."

"Was she so very beautiful, dear Grand? What was she like?"

"The loveliest blonde; with the fairest complexion, the clearest blue eyes, and the brightest hair you ever saw; it was silver in the sunshine and golden in the shade. This radiant hair was a halo of glory around her face and form! This heavenly vision of a child, clothed in white raiment, and adorned with wild flowers, came that day into the dark house of death, bringing light and life with her. She did not see the gloom at first; she ran to me so joyously, saying: 'Are you the ferry-man? Grandpa says, will you please take us for a row on the river this morning? It is my birthday, and I am to have a party this evening and have all the little girls and boys. Will you come, too, and dance?'

"As she asked me this with ladylike grace, she looked at me and smiled; but when she saw my grieved face—for I had been weeping like any woman over my dead father—her tone changed, and she said:

"'Oh, *what* is the matter? *Don't* cry, oh, *don't* cry;' and she put her little fair hands up and drew my face down to hers, and laid her soft cheek against mine.

"I had always loved children, and the tenderness of this lovely little one touched my heart, and opened again the fountain of my tears, and I wept freely; but not so bitterly as before. The child was distressed. She gave herself up to the task of comforting me. She patted my face with her tiny, fair hands. She pressed her rosebud lips to mine; she drew my head upon her sweet, pitying bosom. There was no fear, no self-consciousness;

instead, all pity, tenderness, and an angel's freedom in self-forgetfulness.

"Meanwhile, from the beginning of this interview her attendants had followed her into this room and had been beckoned by my afflicted mother and conducted into the chamber which is now my own, but where lay the remains of my drowned father. She showed them the body, and told them of the accident as a sufficient reason why her son could not go out in the pleasure-boat that day. When they returned to this room the governess told her charge that they must all go back home. My little angel made no opposition, uttered no complaint, but kissed me and begged me not to cry any more, and she would come to see me often; and bring me all her books to read, and her white kitten, and her canary-bird, if they could do me any good. So she left me, wondering at the cause of my distress; for I could not bring myself to tell that bright creature anything about death—especially as *I* understood death, at that period of my life.

"Two days after this we laid the body of my father in the Old Red Sandstone Church-yard, where you have seen his grave. I succeeded to the property and to the management of the ferry. My mother was legally my guardian; but I was practically hers; for I ran the business as well as my father had done in his best days.

"My angel came down every fine day, to have a row with me on the river. She was accompanied by her governess and sometimes by her maid, and attended by her footman. I cannot tell you how deeply she became attached to me, or how religiously I adored her, even from her childhood.

"She grew in goodness and beauty as she grew in stature. She became the idol and the slave of her grandfather, who cherished her with a jealous love and pride that made him her worshipper and her tyrant. He would not part with her to send her to a boarding-school, and as there was no day school, suitable to her, within reach, he procured teachers to live in the house. At one time there was, besides her governess, a professor of ancient and modern languages and a professor of vocal and instrumental music, to whom he paid large salaries for the monopoly of their services.

"If Lily was the idol of that selfish old man, what was she to me? What *was* she? Ah! what was she *not?* I cannot tell you—no words could tell you. If I should exhaust all terms of endearment, I should fail to express the faintest idea of all that she was to me—the delight of my eyes, the star of my fate, the angel of my life. She was all these, and more than these. She was the eternal life of my eternal life in the Lord. She *was* and she *is* all this to me.

"You will wonder how that domineering old man should ever have permitted his cherished idol to take her daily recreation in my ferry-boat. It was because his pride was so superhuman that he looked down on all men beneath him in rank as scarcely human. He regarded the ferry-man, when he deigned to think of him, as a useful brute, who could row her ferry-boat, but as no whit better or nearer to her than the pony that drew her phaeton. Thus there never came a day, when General Slaughter discovered that his granddaughter was growing up to be a young lady, and that it was time to put a stop to her intimacy with the young ferry-man.

"Neither did my mother ever discover the oneness of the love and life between us. She was affected by the traditions of the neighbourhood, the prejudices of rank. She looked up to General Slaughter's heiress as so immeasurably elevated above me, that no sentiment warmer than condescension on her part and respect on mine, could ever draw us nearer each other.

"My Lily's attendants were blinded by the same delusion. We were too infinitely far apart in rank, training, education, wealth, for prudence to take cognizance of our intimacy. Don't you see, that all the parties concerned, except our two selves, considered only external circumstances, and left our souls out of the question? A fatal mistake they afterwards considered it: but it could have made no difference, except in this earthly life, if they had separated us from the first; for we were, and we are *one* forever!

"I cannot tell you at what period we learned that we lived for each other. I do not know when our affection began, when the child and youth met for the first time as if they had been life-long friends. Our love developed,

harmoniously and beautifully. We understood each other so thoroughly, we sympathized with each other so perfectly, that there never seemed a moment when it was necessary for either to speak to the other of love.

"The child developed into a young woman; her governess married; her professional masters soon after left the neighbourhood; even her maid ceased to follow her in her walks, or accompany her in her rides, as when she was a girl. All her habits were changed but one—her daily visits to the Ferry. She rode down every day, attended by Herschel, her groom.

"The old man would wait on the shore, in charge of the horses, while we rowed alone together for hours on the river. Our rows were only subject to be shortened by one circumstance. If the ferry-horn blew on either side of the river it was my duty to obey its summons; so on such occasions I rowed my Lily back to the ferry-house, and proceeded to wait on my customer.

"I was of marriageable age, and my mother was in the decline of life, and having no other children, was anxious that I should select a young girl from my own rank in society, and make her my wife. She wanted female companionship at home, and female help in her household affairs. When this came to my Lily's ears it grieved her spirit for days, until one morning, while we were out rowing together, she said to me:

"'Gabriel, will you not tell your mother?'

"'Tell her what, Lily?' I asked, in some surprise.

"'*About ourselves*. Do you not think she ought to know?'

"'Lily, I do not understand you, dear?'

"'Your mother told me on Monday that as I had as much influence over you as a queen over a subject, she wished that I would persuade you to marry and settle. She said you could marry any girl of your own rank in the neighbourhood. She said that she had often told you so herself. Now, ought we not to tell *her*?'

"'Dearest, dearest Lily, what ought we to tell her?'

"'Why, about ourselves. Tell her we belong to each other, and neither of us would ever think of marrying anybody else. It would be so great a sin and would so ruin our lives.'

"I could have worshipped her for the sweetness, the

purity, the self-forgetfulness and the devotion revealed in her words; but I answered very calmly?

"'May I tell her that, dearest Lily?'

"'Yes, if you please. Do you not think she ought to know it? Tell her you are waiting for me until I shall be twenty-one, and my own mistress, when you will marry me. Tell her you cannot marry until that time, because until then I belong to my grandfather and you cannot take me without his leave, which we are both sure he would never give.'

"'My own White Lily, I will tell her all.'

"Gertrude, this was the first occasion on which either of us ever spoke of marriage, and we spoke of it as of something that had been understood and settled between us years before. I do not think another word was exchanged between us on that or any other subject, as long as we remained on the river. It often happened that we sat together for hours in satisfied silence, scarcely exchanging a word. I took her back at sunset, and she went home as usual, attended by her groom.

"That evening, after tea, when my mother and myself were alone, and she commenced to speak to me of the expediency of my marriage, I told her about my engagement to Lily Vale.

"My poor mother! She thought I had taken leave of my senses. At first she could not speak for consternation. Then she told me I was mad to think of such an impossible thing; that if General Slaughter had the faintest suspicion of my presumption he would shoot me like a mad dog. She implored me to promise her never to see or speak to Lily Vale again.

"I could not promise that; but I did tell her that Lily and I intended to wait until Lily should be twenty-one years old, and her own mistress, before we should talk further of marriage.

"'That is four years off yet,' said my mother. 'In that time you and your young lady will have recovered your right senses and the old man will have died,' she added.

"My dear mother was mistaken. Four years passed and neither I nor my young lady had recovered our right

senses, for we had never lost them; nor had the old man died.

"I had improved the interval by improving myself. I had a passionate love of learning, and spent all my spare money in the purchase of books and my spare moments in their perusal; but from the hour in which I had met my angel I was inspired to a greater diligence in self-education; and from the day on which she promised, as soon as she should become of age, to be my wife, I was possessed with a burning zeal to make myself in all respects worthy to be her husband. I could not enter college, but I studied diligently at home. So three happy years and more than half of the fourth passed away in peace. It was about the first week in April, in the fourth spring, when an Easter party assembled at Hill Top Hall. This party consisted of a dozen ladies and gentlemen, and they had come to stay some weeks.

"It seems that it was the respectful attention paid by the gentlemen of the company to the young lady of the house that first aroused General Slaughter to the consciousness that his grandchild had grown up to be a young woman, of marriageable age, whose eligible establishment in life was desirable.

"Among the guests of the house was a Capt. Dulany, a cavalry officer of handsome person and cultivated mind. He was, by the death of his eldest brother, the sole heir to one of the largest estates in the valley. In age, personal graces, wealth, rank and birth, he was considered an equal and most eligible match for the lovely heiress of Hill Top Hall, however unacceptable as a husband he might be to Lily Vale.

"He would willingly have wooed the maiden, but she had sensitiveness enough to perceive his intentions from the first, and tact sufficient, without wounding his self-love, to prevent his too near approach to her. In this manner she sought to save him from the mortification of a refusal. He was too much in earnest to be baffled in this way. He sought an interview with General Slaughter, and proposed for the hand of the heiress.

"The general favoured the suitor, and directed his granddaughter to accept Captain Dulany as her betrothed husband. Then Lily, from a sense of honour spoke out freely. She told her grandfather that she could not

marry Captain Dulany, because she could never love him as a husband, if her heart and hand had not long been pledged to some one else.

"The despot acted with self-control and diplomacy. He concealed his indignation under a mask of moderation, and asked her to tell him who that somebody else might be, and whether he was not young Coombes, or Forbes, or Perry, naming several other youths of her acquaintance. But when she smiled, and told him her betrothed was not one of these, but was the young ferry-man, Gabriel Haddon, his indignation burst forth in violence! The abuse my Lily had to bear from that tyrant beggars all description! He treated her with a brutality that would have been cruel to the most rebellious of criminals in our State prisons; and that was little less than the massacre of the maiden exposed to it. Oh! my blue-eyed child! All this passed long ago, and you have been comforted these many years; yet, when I recall your martyrdom now, my heart breaks and bleeds afresh!

"He beat her, Gertrude! The monster beat that delicate child. Dragged her by the hair of her head to the door of her chamber, and threw her in with such violence that she fell heavily down on the floor. There he locked her in and left her, insensible and without help; and he went down stairs swearing that '*That* should teach her how to disgrace her family by keeping company with low-lived ferry-men!'

"The servants who heard him storming through the house that morning, got out of his way, and huddled together to ask each other, in whispers, what their young lady could have done to throw their old master into such a furious passion? Meanwhile, through all that terrible day and night, my Lily, a prisoner, lay where she had been hurled, broken, bruised, unconscious, and uncared for, on the floor of her own bed-chamber."

CHAPTER IX.

"THE SECRETS OF THAT PRISON HOUSE."

"HIRAM SLAUGHTER was possessed by a demon, as subtle as he was cruel and remorseless," said the old ferry-man. "To account for the absence of his granddaughter from the drawing-room and the dining-room, he gave out that she was laid up with illness. Most likely she was ill from the inhuman treatment she had received.

"The Easter party broke up, and the visitors returned to their homes, leaving kind regards for Miss Vale, with regrets for her indisposition, and hopes for her recovery.

"Meanwhile, the monster kept his victim confined to her chamber, without proper attendance, without books, music, writing materials, needle-work, or any means of employment or recreation, and restricted to a regimen of coarse bread and water once each day, as the best discipline to break down her body, mind, and spirit and to reduce her to a state of prostration in which she might be compelled to give up her low-born lover, and accept the husband her guardian proposed to her. I knew nothing of all this wickedness at the time it was going on, or for a long time afterward; for I was a hot-blooded young man, with an undisciplined spirit, and if I had suspected the half Lily was suffering, I should have burned down this domestic bastile over the tyrant's head and delivered my angel by fire. But I knew nothing, suspected nothing.

"I waited day after day for her customary call at the ferry for a row on the river. When a week had passed without her arrival, I wondered more and more at her absence. I grew uneasy, anxious, then agonized. The hope that had sustained me at first—namely, that

she, as the lady of the house, had been too much occupied with her company to leave her leisure to come to the ferry, gave way, when guest after guest left the hall and came here to cross the river, and I was kept busy all day with the ferry-boat, taking them and their carriages, horses, and servants over the river until the last visitor was gone, and still she came not.

"Unable longer to bear the suspense I left my business and walked up to Hill Top Hall. I met Lily's old groom near the entrance to the grounds. I asked him first how they all were up at the house. Herschel answered that they were all well except the young lady, who kept her room on account of sickness. It was nothing serious, the old man added, because no physician had been sent for. He thought she was only over-tired from entertaining so much company, and had taken cold by sitting out in the dew with them.

"Old Herschel had not up to that time discovered the truth; but it must be remembered that his duties were not at the house, but in the stables. I charged the old man with a discreetly worded message for Lily, and returned home much relieved in mind.

"I waited patiently for two or three days without seeing or hearing from Lily. Then growing anxious again I made a second visit to Hill Top Hall. Failing to meet any of the servants, I walked up to the house, knocked at the front door and inquired for General Slaughter. Fortunately the Ogre was not at home. I next asked for Mrs. Pimento, the housekeeper, who came to the door to see what I wanted. I had to be very cautious in speaking with this dame, lest I should compromise my white Lily, whose peace and honour were dearer to me than my soul. I told Mrs. Pimento that I had heard Miss Vale was indisposed and I had called with my respectful duty to inquire if she was any better. The housekeeper answered me as the groom had done:—That Miss Vale had not been well for a week past, but that her indisposition was not serious enough to require the attendance of a physician.

"Again I returned home, but not so well satisfied as after my first visit. It seemed to me that for a 'slight indisposition,' her sickness was lasting a long time. I waited a long, anxious week, and made a third visit to

Hill Top Hall, and with the same result. It was the gardener, whom I met near the park gate, that I talked with on this occasion, and who told me that there was not much the matter with Miss Vale, though she was not able to leave her room.

"'Not much the matter with her?' I echoed in sorrow at what I began to consider the stupidity of the whole family. 'Not much the matter? Why, she has been indisposed for two weeks! There must be something serious the matter!'

"The gardener assured me that there was no cause for alarm. The old master was not at all uneasy, and had not sent for the doctor.

"I went home in a high fever of anxiety, feeling convinced my Lily's health was in a more perilous condition than her friends suspected. Oh! if I had but known that she was a close prisoner in her own chamber, her frame wasting away on worse than prison fare of bread and water; her mind waning for want of occupation and sympathy; without any attendance but that of her tyrant, who was her jailer, and a cringing old negro hag, who was his most abject slave. But I knew nothing. And she was perishing in captivity as if she had no lover!

"Another week of suspense had passed, and in the dead of night I was lying on my bed, wide awake with anxiety, and meditating another visit to Hill Top Hall in the morning, when I was startled by a loud knocking at the door.

"I jumped out of bed, slipped on some clothes, and opened the door, expecting to find some one who wanted to cross the ferry at that weird hour of the night. I saw no traveller standing without. I saw only Gad, a deaf and dumb black boy from the Hill Top plantation. I beckoned him to enter the house, and awaited the issue. He bowed several times, fumbled in his pockets, and produced a pink note, which he placed in my hands. Then he bowed several times, and took his seat on the edge of the chair and waited.

"I knew before I touched it that the note came from Lily. It was written with a lead pencil on what seemed to be a piece of pink tissue paper, and folded like an ordinary note. I pressed it to my lips, opened it and—

But here it is. I will read it to you," said the old man, taking from his neck a silk cord attached to which was an oil-silk bag, from which he drew a faded pink paper which he unfolded, as he said:

"My little True, to no one but yourself would I ever show this sacred memento of my angel. *You* will listen to its contents with the reverential tenderness with which *I* have cherished it these many years. Here it is:"

IN MY ROOM, HILL TOP HOUSE,

Thursday Evening.

MY BELOVED:

I seize the first chance to write to you and to tell you why I have not been down to the ferry to take my usual row on the river. Circumstances compelled me to confess to my grandfather the betrothal existing between you and me. He disapproved of it, as we knew that he would, and to prevent the possibility of our meeting he has restricted me to the limits of my own room.

Now, dear Gabriel, we must not presume to criticise my grandfather's course, but we must be patient for a little while. You have waited for me a long time already, dear Gabriel, but continue to wait patiently for two months longer, until the fifteenth of July, your birth-day and mine, when you will be thirty years old and I twenty-one, and both of discreet age to marry, after so long an engagement and such unbroken affection. Then, when I shall be mistress of myself and of my fortune, I will give myself and all that I possess to you, who have always had my heart. I write only to explain my absence, and to cheer you under this short separation, and not to assure you of my eternal love, for of that I know you are fully assured.

I send this letter through my aged attendant Letty, who will wait up until all the household have retired, and take it out to the Quarters, and wake up Gad and dispatch him with it. She will see him safely off the place and on his road to the ferry before she returns to me; but she will not be able to meet him when he gets back early in the morning. So, in case he should be met by others, suspected and examined, it is best that nothing should be found in his possession to bring him into trouble. Therefore, dear Gabriel, much as I long for a word of affection from you, I must ask you not to answer this letter, though I will write to you in this way as often as I can.

Keep my mute messenger with you all night, and send him home in the early dawn of day. And do not, as you love me, come near the house again. I have heard, through Letty, who was told by her fellow-servants, of your three visits. The

wonder is that you were not met by my grandfather, who, if he had seen you, would have made us much trouble. Do not run such another risk; but, my dear Gabriel, be patient until the fifteenth of July, when, as surely as I shall live, I will come to you and thenceforth and forever be your own Lily.

"I scarcely needed to have shown you this letter," said the old man; "for every word of it is engraven on the tablets of my memory. I could have repeated it all to you. It was the first, the last, the only letter she ever wrote to me. I have nearly worn it out with reading it over," he added, as he folded the faded shreds and replaced them in the oil-silk bag.

"Observe, Gertrude," he continued, "that in this sweet note no complaint of ill-treatment was made; not the least hint of her sufferings was given; she was 'restricted to the limits of her own chamber,' *that* was all she revealed; and only *that*, to explain why she never came down to take her usual daily recreation on the river.

"Thus no suspicion of the foulest play entered my mind. I was reassured by her letter. She was not indisposed at all; but was given out to be so by her grandfather as an excuse for her seclusion in her room; and no one but General Slaughter and his slave, Letty, were permitted to be in the secret. I could not question her messenger; my limited powers of conversing with him by signs enabled him to follow me as I conducted him to my own bedroom, where I made him a pallet on the floor.

"Next morning the boy arose of his own accord before sunrise, and started on his return to Hill Top plantation.

"I had obeyed my lady. I had put a constraint on myself, and refrained from writing back by the mute messenger through whom it was impossible to send a verbal message. I knew from the fact of her choosing the dumb child for her errand-boy how great she considered the danger of discovery to the messenger as well as to all others in case of a search or a verbal examination. The deaf mute was the only safe courier, and he must not be charged with a written reply to the note he brought. I refrained from writing to her, and from going to Hill Top Hall; but I could not be patient long. As day after day passed without bringing her messenger back with a note, a feverish anxiety grew on me.

"The next fortnight seemed the longest I ever passed in my life. The days seemed weeks, the weeks months in length. I occupied myself with preparations for our marriage. I told my mother that I was about to marry, and bring home a wife, whom I hoped she would love as a daughter, and I told her who that wife was to be.

"The sweet old lady was frightened almost into a fit at the idea of my presuming to continue to think of General Slaughter's granddaughter, though that young lady would soon be of age, with her hand and fortune at her own disposal. But after she had recovered from the first shock of the announcement, she was persuaded to yield to the inevitable, and to assist me in making arrangements for the reception of my bride.

"I gladly lavished the savings of years in fitting up the inside of the old house as well as I could. I engaged a man to assist me at the ferry, so that I might have more time to devote to my bride, and to take my place if we should decide to go on a wedding trip. In my impatience at the delay, I hurried all preparations for the marriage, as if their completion could bring the wedding-day any nearer.

"At the end of the fortnight all was ready; but there yet remained six weeks before the happy day when the captive should be free, and I should be blessed with her hand. It was on the night of the fourteenth day after the reception of her letter. My mother was in bed. I lingered to close up the house with extra care, for a black cloud was rising over Eagle Roost Ridge and I knew a storm was gathering.

"When I had secured the fastenings, I went to bed; but the storm soon broke over all the mountain region with violence, and the battling of the elements kept me wide awake. The storm had reached its height about midnight. I remember hearing the clock strike twelve, and hearing a faint rap at the front door, a low sound, lost in the burst of thunder that followed it; but it was so unmistakably a rap that I jumped out of bed, lighted a candle, drew on some clothes and hurried out, wondering if the visitor could be some storm-tossed traveller, and hoping he might be the deaf and dumb messenger from Hill Top Hall with a letter for me. I put the candle in the lantern to save it from being

blown out, and unlocked and opened the door, asking at the same time—'Who is there?'

"There was no reply. I held the lantern up and looked into the darkness of night and storm, but I could see nothing until a flash of lightning showed me, lying at my threshold, a shrouded figure, and no other living creature in sight. In surprise I held the lantern close to the mysterious form, but could not recognize it, because the face was turned down and the limbs were huddled up under a cloak. I touched the form, and asked:

"'Who are you? Are you Gad from Hill Top Hall?'

"No answer.

"'Are you a traveller?'

"No answer.

"'Get up and come into the house, then.'

"No motion, but another flash of lightning revealed the enveloping garment of the crouching form to be a woman's water-proof cloak.

"'Some poor, lost wretch,' I thought, as I stooped and lifted the fallen figure, bore it into the parlour and laid it on the sofa, where it remained motionless.

"'She has fainted from exhaustion, poor soul,' I said to myself, as I left her there in the dark room and returned to the hall to close the front door. As soon as I had secured the door, I took the lantern and went to a cupboard in my room, in which I kept a bottle of camphor for medicinal uses. I poured out a glassful, and with the glass in one hand and the candle in the other I returned to the dark parlour in which I had left the fainting woman. I set the glass and candle on a stand near the sofa, and began to open the water-proof cloak that enveloped the form and concealed the face of the stranger.

"I laid the garment open, and then— Oh, Lily, Lily!"

The old man paused, and bowed his head on his chest in the agony of awakened memory and sorrow.

CHAPTER X.

A FLIGHT BY NIGHT.

PRESENTLY the ferry-man resumed:

"Oh, judge the amazement, the delight, the anguish, that followed each other, as I beheld the lovely face of my Lily lying there!—but, oh, so pale and wan and worn!

"I know not what wild words of welcome, of love, of sorrow, I used, as I chafed her hands and face with the camphor, and tried by every means to restore her to consciousness, until she sighed and opened her blue eyes. She glanced fearfully around the room, and into my face.

"'Love! love! love!' was all that I could say, as I knelt beside her and took her hand.

"'Am I here? How did I get here?' she murmured. Then she started up as if she felt no faintness, and exclaimed: 'Oh, Gabriel, I was compelled to fly! I will tell you all about it.'

"'My dearest, dearest Lily, you shall tell me nothing until your necessities have had attention, and you are rested and refreshed. You shall tell me everything you please to-morrow morning. Lie down again, my Lily, while I call my mother to you,' I said.

"'Oh, what will your mother think of me?' she cried. 'But I was compelled to come! Oh, I was compelled to come! I wish you would let me tell you how! I cannot bear you should think for a moment anything less than—than what I have to tell you could have driven me to such an act.'

"'My love, I know you to be blameless as an angel. So will my mother. I ought to bring her to you now, my dearest Lily. Your clothing is saturated with the rain. You will be ill if not attended to.'

"She sank back on her sofa. Her excitement was over, she was too weak to remonstrate longer. I waked up my mother and old Jess, upon whom I could depend,

I told my mother what had happened. She was speechless with consternation, but she dressed herself and came down stairs, followed by old Jess.

"My poor girl had relapsed into such faintness that she could scarcely speak. When my mother saw her condition, terror gave way to pity and curiosity. With the assistance of Jess, they carried her up stairs, where they changed her wet clothing for dry, put her to bed and gave her some hot cordial to put her to sleep. By this time the storm was over and the day was breaking.

"My mother came down and reported the condition of her patient. What surprised me was the change in my mother. Instead of her usual mildness and timidity, she exhibited indignation and courage. She sat by my side, and said, firmly:—'Gabriel Haddon, you must marry that poor, dear girl to-day.'

"'I fully intended to do so, mother. Has she said anything to you?'

"'Nothing. She is too much prostrated. But in changing her clothes, we found her shoulders and chest black and blue with bruises from the blows that have been dealt her.'

"With a cry of rage and pain, I sprang to my feet with an impulse as if I could fly through 'night and storm and darkness' up to Hill Top Hall, through stone walls, and barred and bolted doors, to the presence of the brute, and drag him from his bed to—

"My mother laid her hands upon me.

"'What would you do, Gabriel? You are crazy! Calm yourself and think of the girl who has fled to us for refuge. She is not killed, though she has suffered frightfully.'

"I ground my teeth until I could hear them crack.

"'She must be our first consideration. You must fly with her to the nearest point, and marry her.'

"'Will she be able to go?' I anxiously inquired.

"'After she has had a refreshing sleep she may; that is, she *must* have strength to go with you from here to the nearest minister who can lawfully marry you. You must go out of Virginia to find one who can do that: for the girl, wanting several weeks of her majority, cannot be lawfully married in Virginia without the consent of her guardian.'

"'I will do that! I will make the angel my lawful wife, and then—then!'

"'Then you will not dream of taking vengeance on General Slaughter, or of doing anything to trouble her peace. You will take her to some quiet place where she can rest with you for a few weeks, until her twenty-first birth-day, when you can bring her back and defy that brute; for you will have the law on your own side. Now, you had better put up a few changes of clothing for yourself in the valise. I will fill a travelling-bag with such articles as will be most needed for her. Jess will get breakfast ready, and your new ferry-man can cross over, and go to Wildeville, and have a carriage on the other side to meet you, and take you to the stage-office to catch the Alexandria down coach.'

"I followed my mother's advice. I saw she planned with skill and acted with expedition. I made all the arrangements she suggested. I chained and locked every ferry-boat from the great flat boat to the smallest canoe, with the exception of the skiff in which my assistant had crossed, and with which I should a little later take Lily to meet the carriage, for I was determined to cut off from General Slaughter the hazards of pursuit. I put the keys of the boat-locks in my pocket, and returned to the house.

"When I entered the parlour I found breakfast on the table, and my White Lily, dressed in my mother's best clothes, reclining in the easy-chair. She was very silent, not speaking when I went up to her, and took her hand and pressed it reverently to my lips, and asked her how she felt.

"Mother called us to breakfast, and I wheeled Lily's chair to the table and served her with the best upon it. But she could not eat. It was scarcely to be expected she should. She drank a cup of strong coffee, but seemed frightened of pursuit and eager to escape. We arose from the table. My mother laid a merino shawl over Lily's shoulders, tied a net veil over the scoop bonnet, put a hand-bag containing gloves and a pocket handkerchief in her hand, kissed her and blessed her, and gave her over to me. I led her to the Ferry. John, my assistant, was there with the boat.

"The sun was rising over the Eagle-Roost Ridge.

As I put Lily in the boat I told her that this was a good omen, and quoted the proverb, 'Happy is the bride that the sun shines on.' She looked at me and smiled —oh! such a sad smile!—and murmured, glancing around:—'But I am not a bride yet!'

"I pressed her hand encouragingly, put her in the boat, and took my seat beside her, while John pushed off from the shore, and rowed us over the river.

"The carriage from the Wildeville Hotel with the coachman on the box was waiting at the pier. I put Lily into it, and told John to lock the boat on this side the river, and take a holiday for a whole day.

"John understood me as well as if I had explained to him that I wished to have all communication between the two shores of the river cut off for twenty-four hours. He nodded acquiescence. Our negro coachman started his horses. I put my arm over Lily's shoulder and drew her head on my breast, to give her the support her weakness so much needed then. As we bowled along the turnpike road leading south between the base of the mountain and the bank of the river, toward Wildeville, Lily begged to tell me the reasons of her flight.

"Oh, then I discovered that it was not the violence she had suffered which had driven her from her home. Lily never told me of *that*, nor should I have known it had not my mother discovered it and informed me. No, it was something worse, if worse could be. It was a plot of almost incredible atrocity against her liberty, her peace, and her honour. She found it out through the old negro woman who was her sole attendant in her prison chamber, and who, though in fear of her master, yet was so moved by love for her lady, as to become a secret partisan and spy for her sake. She warned Lily to be careful of what she ate and drank; because since other means had proved in vain to reduce her to obedience, drugs were to be employed to stupefy her sensibilities, so that she should consent to, or not oppose, the marriage that was to be forced upon her. Lily knew nothing of the power of drugs and her ignorance added to her terror.

"That same night, after all the family were in bed, Lily cut into strips her sheets, counterpanes and curtains, and plaited a strong rope, one end of which she

fastened securely to the post of her bedstead. With this rope, passed through the window, she let herself to the ground, and so made her escape to us. Her's was a fearful walk down the mountain pass that night, as the storm burst on her before she had toiled half-way down the steep. She bore up until she reached the door, and rapped once. Then everything whirled around with her and she was lost. Such was the story of her escape. She told it without exaggeration, without criticism; and I had to supplement it from what had been told me by my mother, and from what I saw before me, to understand its atrocity. I said and did all I could to cheer her.

"Two hours' drive brought us to Wildeville, where we caught the Alexandria mail-coach, a few minutes before it was going to start. I put Lily in the back-seat, and took my place beside her. Our fellow-travellers were all men, strangers to us, and seemed to be farmers, who regarded with curiosity the only woman in the company—the little Methodist figure by my side, on the back seat. They took her to be my wife, and offered her many kindly attentions during the journey.

"We changed horses at every post-house, but never changed our coach. We stopped for breakfast, dinner, and supper; but not for sleep. Nothing but the necessity of completing and securing her escape, enabled Lily to bear up under her fatigue until the afternoon of the third day, when we arrived at Alexandria, in the District of Columbia.

"Lily was more exhausted than I had seen any living creature. She did not swoon; further exertion was necessary. I drove to the court-house, to procure a marriage-license before the register's office should be closed. With the license we drove to the house of the nearest clergyman, and were married.

"I took Lily to the best hotel, where I registered our names, and engaged a room. There Lily succumbed to her weariness, and had to keep her room for days. I nursed her tenderly, and brought her books, fruit, and everything to please or amuse her. It was warm at this season of the year in the town, and I was anxious to get into the country, as soon as Lily should be able to travel.

"I had one hundred and fifty dollars with me—all my savings; and Lily had as much more, as she had taken the precaution to put her pocket-book, containing all her ready money, in her bosom previous to her flight from Hill Top Hall. So there was no fear of our suffering from financial troubles during the six weeks that must intervene before she should become of age, when it would be safe for me to carry her to my home in Virginia.

"We had been at the hotel a week when I got a letter from my mother, written two days after our flight. She informed me that General Slaughter was laid up with a fit of the gout, brought on by the passion into which he had thrown himself on his discovery of the escape of his granddaughter. This gave Lily much relief; for the crushed child had an almost superstitious horror of her tyrant, and belief in his power to persecute and destroy her. Her spirits recovered. She went out shopping and bought goods for clothes, and engaged a dress-maker and seamstress to work them up. While Lily was thus engaged, I was hunting up a pleasant boarding-house in the country. I found one at a farm-house on the banks of the Potomac, half way between Arlington and Mount Vernon. I took my Lily there early in June, and there we spent four happy weeks, during which she recovered all her beauty.

"I am making my story too long; but I have not spoken of these days to any one for years. I draw near the end now. We had been in our retreat four happy weeks. We had celebrated our Fourth of July, as Lily said, for the first time with full appreciation of what Independence Day meant, for the first time she was free. I, with a lover's fond egotism, replied that she was not free, since she belonged to me. Oh, how well I remember her heavenly words! She smiled like a radiant angel, and dropped her head upon my bosom, as she answered:

"'Yes, I am yours—spirit, soul, and body! *Yours!* Why, I am you! And, like the service of the Lord, the service of love is perfect freedom! So I am free as air! free as space!'

"That was our last happy evening in this world. Next morning as Lily and myself sat out on the east

piazza of the farm-house enjoying the morning air, and looking out on the broad river, and upon the distant spires of Washington city, a carriage drove up to the gate. Three men alighted from it, opened the gate, and walked up the footpath leading to the house. I could see only the foremost man, who was tall and so portly as to cover the two who walked in single file behind him. The foremost man stepped on the piazza, and asked me if my name was Gabriel Haddon. I answered yes, and was about to ask his business with me, when a shriek from Lily caused me to turn my head. She was sitting back in her chair with every vestige of colour fled from her face. I started towards her, but at the same instant the constable, for that was his office, laid a hand on my shoulder, and said:

"'Gabriel Haddon, you are my prisoner.'

"'Upon what charge?' I demanded. He tightened his hold, while the other man came up on the other side, and seized me. I repeated my question:

"'Upon what charge do you arrest me?'

"'Upon the charge of kidnapping and abducting a minor from her home, and marrying her afterward contrary to law, you villain! and for which you shall be sent for a term of years to prison, you thief!' exclaimed General Slaughter.

"His furious looks and threatening words did not disturb me; I did not reply to the monster, but turned to my angel, and said:—'Fear nothing Lily. You are my wedded wife, and under your husband's protection. The man has no further power over you. These officers of the law, whom he has brought here to do his bidding will, as soon as they shall know the truth, be bound to relieve us of his presence.'

"At this Hiram Slaughter burst forth into a roar of laughter. Lily spoke no word, but tightened her clasping hands and looked at me with sad, prayerful eyes.

"I turned to the stout constable whose hand still clutched me, and said:

"'If you will permit me, I wish to show you something pertinent to this affair.'

"He let go my shoulder. I dived into the breast pocket of my coat, and drew forth our marriage certificate, which I gave to the constable, saying:

"'You will be so good as to read that aloud, and then return it to me.'

"He took it and looked over it. While he was doing so, I noticed that the members of the farmer's family had gathered to the piazza and were watching all the proceedings with curiosity and interest.

"The constable read the marriage certificate out aloud, and returned it to me, as I had requested him to do, and then he spoke to General Slaughter.

"'It seems to be all right, sir.'

"'Oh, yes, it seems to be all right!' exclaimed the despot. '*I* think it all *just* right! Bring away your prisoner, officer.'

"'But, sir?'

"'Bring off your prisoner; or let me have a word with this hero, it may save trouble,' he added. Turning to me, he said: 'You married my granddaughter, a minor, at the Rectory of St. John's Church in Alexandria, District of Columbia, did you not?'

"'I did, sir.'

"'Therefore, though my granddaughter was a minor, acting in defiance of her guardian's will in entering into this marriage, the marriage is lawful and valid?'

"'Yes, sir, it is,' I answered, confidently.

"'Because it was celebrated in Alexandria, District of Columbia, and not in Virginia?'

"'Of course, sir; for Virginia is the only State, I think, where a young man or woman may not marry at will after they are eighteen years of age,' I answered.

"Again that peal of devilish laughter that shook the nerves of my Lily.

"'Oh! he is fatal when he laughs!' she whispered.

"When he had indulged in this mirth to his heart's content, he ceased laughing, and his aspect changed to one of malignity as he turned to me and hissed:

"'*Fool!* you have outwitted yourself! *Thief!* you have entrapped yourself! *Scoundrel!* you have ruined the girl—not married her! If you wished to steal a wife you should have crossed the river and gone to Washington City, which is governed by the laws of Maryland, which permits the marriage of a minor without the consent of parents or guardians. You should not have stopped at Alexandria, which is governed by

the laws of Virginia. You didn't know that? Well, everybody doesn't. Your marriage certificate is not worth a rush. Officer, you have your warrant! Take Gabriel Haddon into custody. And you, madame, come with me, and learn through a severer discipline than you have yet known, not to run away with low-born knaves!' he exclaimed, as he strode toward the shrinking child and clutched her with a grin of triumph.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK MAGIC.

"THE scene that followed! Oh! Heaven, the scene that followed! When I saw the savage clutch my Lily with such violence that she moaned under his talons, with a desperate bound I threw off the two men who held me, sprang upon the beast, hurled him from his prey, and gathered her to my bosom.

"Ah, poor dove! She had but an instant's respite.

"With hue and cry they set upon me — Hiram Slaughter, the constables, and the men of the house, whom they called to their aid. Lily was torn from me. I was beaten down, and handcuffed as if I had been a felon.

"One of the women of the house was sent to our room to fetch Lily's hat and sack. When these were put on the pale, trembling child by one of the girls. Hiram Slaughter seized his victim, and jerked her hand within his arm to lead her away.

"Then she turned upon me such a look of heavenly love and trust, as, rising above all weakness, she said:

"'Take courage, dear husband. In ten days I shall be of age, and then no one will have a right to stay me, and I will come to you; for let them say what they will, I know that I am your own wedded wife."

"'TAKE THAT, you impudent jade!' roared Hiram Slaughter, striking her upon the mouth with his open hand.

"I was maddened by the sight. I struggled with my captors, like a maniac. I railed on Hiram Slaughter like any drunkard. Ah, how futile were all my efforts! She held a handkerchief to her wounded lips, to absorb the blood, and looked at me with eyes full of compassion.

"Oh, how contemptible I seemed to myself, in my helplessness to help her! When I realized this, I shamed my manhood and wept. Then her sweet voice spoke again:

"'Yet be patient, dear Gabriel. What can they do to us, after all? They can but torture or kill the body, and 'after that they have no more that they can do.' They cannot separate our spirits, even in this world; they can never part us, who are one forever.' As she spoke, she had to pause to put the handkerchief to her bleeding lips.

"'Lily! Oh, would Heaven I could die to save you, my love,' I cried out, in the extremity of my anguish.

"'Live to bless me, dear Gabriel, as I shall live to love you,' she earnestly answered.

"Hiram Slaughter jerked her forward, shook her with violence, and pushed her into the carriage. I struggled to loose my hands to throw off the men that held me and to go to her rescue, but all in vain.

"'Why do you not arrest that monster for assault upon that delicate girl?' I thundered to my captors.

"'She is a minor in the hands of her guardian. She has rebelled against his authority, and he has a lawful right to chastise her,' said one of the officers.

"'You see we can't interfere. Besides, we have enough to do to take care of you,' added the other.

"Meanwhile Hiram Slaughter had followed his white slave into the carriage, which was driven off up the river road toward Alexandria. Between the constables I was led away now, in the collapse of despair. A prison van awaited us. We entered it, and followed the first carriage.

"Oh, my dear Gertrude, let me hurry over this black page in my book of life! Guiltless as I was then, wiser as I have become now, I cannot look back on it without shame and horror. I was taken before a magistrate in Alexandria, where I met my accuser and the fair bride, whom I was accused of having adducted from the township of Wildeville, and illegally married in Alexandria. Fortunately for Lily, it was at an hour of

the forenoon when all the morning 'cases' had been disposed of, and the magistrate was alone in his office, except for his clerk and one or two constables. Our hearing was, therefore, comparatively private.

"Hiram Slaughter was as wily as he was ferocious. All his violence disappeared before the magistrate. He sat on a side bench with Lily beside him. His arm was around her waist. He seemed to hold her more a pet than a prisoner. He told his story with exaggeration, yet with coolness. By his statement I was made to appear the most unprincipled knave, and my wife the most infatuated fool, on earth. From that start the magistrate was biassed against me. When my turn came, I told my story and Lily's in our justification, but without effect. If justice and humanity were on our side, law and the magistrate seemed on our antagonist's.

"After a brief examination, Lily, my bride, was given into the custody of her guardian, and I was committed to jail to await the action of the sheriff at Wildeville.

"Lily was borne away unconscious by her grandfather.

"I was taken to prison. I keenly felt the degradation that had fallen upon me; but how much more keenly the horrors that awaited my wife. I was overwhelmed and prostrated by despair. I supposed that Hiram Slaughter had taken Lily back to Wildeville. With a desperate effort I aroused myself to write to my mother, enclosing a letter to Lily, which I begged her to try to forward secretly, and to get an answer if she could. I sent off this letter but before there was time to get a reply, the sheriff's officers came from Wildeville with warrants and carried me back thither to answer to the charge of having abducted a minor. Gertrude! When I was committed to the Alexandria jail my hair and beard were golden red. A week later, when I was conveyed to Wildeville, they were silver white."

"And that was the black magic that turned the gold to silver?" said the young girl, compassionately.

"It was, my child. The day after I was committed to the Wildeville prison, my mother came to see me. She looked worn with sorrow and anxiety. She controlled her feelings for the sake of comforting me; but when she saw, from the change that had passed over

me, what a terrible ordeal I had gone through already, she was overcome with emotion; she rallied sufficiently to tell me that she had received my letter, but had failed to have its enclosed note conveyed to Lily.

"Lily, she told me, was ill at Hill Top House, and that Dr. Wedderburn was attending her. I was not surprised to hear this; but I was not the less afflicted at the tale. My mother had brought clean linen and bedclothing, to help to render my imprisonment more endurable. She told me that she would take care of our place, and John Young could manage the ferry until my release; for she seemed to have no doubt that I should be acquitted.

"My mother stayed until it was time to close the prison doors, and she commended me to the care of Heaven and departed. She visited me every day for the few days that I remained in the Wildeville jail.

"The court was sitting, and I was soon brought to trial. I had the best counsel I could procure, but it availed me little; the law of the land and the prejudices of rank seemed against me. The trial was short. I was arraigned on the Monday following my arrival at Wildeville, and I was convicted and sentenced on Tuesday. The penalty of my so-called felony was two years' imprisonment, with hard labour, in the State Penitentiary at Richmond. I was carried down next day. My heart-broken mother stayed with me as much as she could, accompanying me to the city, and never leaving me until the doors of the prison had closed on me.

"I was not put to very hard labour, for I was the only educated prisoner in the penitentiary; so I was assigned to duty in the warden's office, where I did nine-tenths of the work for which he received the salary. My wife, my liberty, my good name had all been wrested from me, and all minor conditions of good or evil were unfelt.

"The term of my imprisonment commenced on my thirtieth birth-day, the fatal fifteenth of July, fifteen years after I had first met the child Lily; the day on which she became of age, when she had vowed to come to me and be my wife. She lived; but she was at the point of death with a fever, and more likely to cross the dark river than to take any other journey. I had no

means of hearing from her, even if I had been permitted to write before the end of the month, which I was not.

"On the first of August, the visiting day, my mother came to see me. I entrusted a letter to her, and begged her to journey back to Wildeville and inquire about my Lily, find out whether she were living or dead, and try to get that letter conveyed to her hands.

"My mother started on her mission. What would she not have done for her imprisoned son? She was gone a week; at the end of that time she returned. She could not visit me until the next visiting day, on the first of September; but she sought an interview with the prison-chaplain, through whose kindness I received news of Lily—bitter sweet!

"She had recovered from her illness, thank Heaven! but she had been taken from Hill Top House by General Slaughter, and no one knew or surmised whither they had gone. This was the substance of the intelligence brought from Wildeville by my mother, and given me by the chaplain.

"My poor mother never ceased in her efforts to get me pardoned out; but we had a stern governor; so there was no hope for me but in my outliving my term of imprisonment. One weary month followed another and brought the winter.

"In Christmas week I sent my mother up to Wildeville to inquire concerning Lily. She returned to me on the first of January, with the news that General Slaughter and his ward were still absent, in what part of the world no one knew. The winter passed. My mother visited me every month, and brought me such comforts as the prison rules or the warden's indulgence allowed me to receive. Early in the spring my mother went to Wildeville; but returned with the information that General Slaughter and his ward had not returned, and had not been heard from by anybody but Oxman, his overseer, who declined to reveal his whereabouts.

"While my mother was at the ferry, she arranged with our ferry-man, John, to glean all the information concerning the 'Slaughter House,' as Hill Top Hall began to be called, and to get the village schoolmaster to write a letter, at John's dictation, once a month, to convey the intelligence to us. This was to save the

trouble and expense of her visits to Wildeville, as well as to obtain more frequent news. Our ferry-man kept us posted as to the existence of 'no news' whatever. So the spring ripened into summer and brought the fourteenth of July, the day before the anniversary of my entrance into the penitentiary, half of my imprisonment; and every day would make the coming year shorter, and bring me nearer to the day of release!

"But where was my Lily? How was she? What was she doing? She knew that I was a prisoner; but *I* knew if she were free, she would hasten to Richmond, share the home of my mother, and with her visit me every month during my confinement. Her failure to do this kept me on the rack of anxiety. On the evening of this fourteenth of July the warden brought me a piece of news—an unexpected stroke of good fortune. I was to be pardoned out; that the pardon was to take effect next morning, when, after some formalities, I should be set at liberty. Oh, the joy that filled my heart! For the moment everything was forgotten but that I should be free in the morning.

"My mother's exertions, petitions, and representations had produced a harvest of success when we least expected it. It seems that even the stern Governor —— had perceived the injustice, and released me as soon as he could—at the close of my first year of imprisonment. With the warden's permission, I sent for my mother, and saw her alone in the warden's parlour and told her the joyous news, and we rejoiced together.

"We made arrangements to visit Wildeville next day. She packed up all her effects and such of mine as remained in her possession; and brought me a new suit of clothes and a wig, for I had not escaped the convict's degradation of the shaved head.

"It was late when my mother took leave of me—the happiest leave-taking we had enjoyed for months. I retired to my cell for the night. I stretched myself on my cot-pallet; but could not sleep. Although in a prison-cell, I was too happy to sleep; for next morning I should be free to go into the world; free to seek my Lily. Did I doubt that I should find her? Oh, no! I was too full of delight to doubt anything. I should find my Lily, would let the ferry, and I would take her and

my mother and we would go to some distant land, where our troubles had never been heard of, and where our sorrows would be forgotten by ourselves. In my exaltation of hope I felt as sure that all this would happen as that to-morrow's sun would rise. I lay in a delightful reverie, gazing through the grated window of my cell. I heard the clock strike every hour until midnight. When it struck twelve I exclaimed aloud:

"'This is the blessed day, that gives me liberty.'

"It seemed to me then as if I had been in prison nearly all my life and this was the first day of freedom. I lay in a half-trance until I heard the clock strike one.

"Now, Gertrude, what next followed was so mysterious, so incredible, that if it had not been corroborated by subsequent circumstances I could not have believed it then, nor could I ask you to believe it now."

The ferryman dropped his head on his chest and fell into a deep reverie, that lasted until Gertrude roused him by asking:

"Dear grandpa, what was it that happened to you on the night of the fourteenth of July?"

CHAPTER XII.

"A VISION PASSED BEFORE ME."

"IT was the morning of the Fifteenth, child. It was after one o'clock, Gertrude. Call it a dream, vision, hallucination, anything you please; but I was awake, wide awake, vividly wide awake when it happened.

"I had heard the clock strike one while I lay gazing through the grated window, on the cool night scene—the star-lit sky reflected on the dark river; and I closed my eyes and lay in a delightful reverie, thinking of the morning just come, when I should be free; of the days soon coming when I should be re-united with Lily; and in the midst of this day-dreaming I heard a sweet, clear voice murmur in my ear:—'*Gabriel.*'

"The voice thrilled my soul, for it was the voice of my beloved. But next instant a tender awe fell upon me as I opened my eyes and inquired, as if in doubt:

"'Who called me?'

"I listened intently, but there was no reply. I gazed around, but there was nothing to be seen but the walls of my prison-cell, and the grated window in the wall, against which my cot stood. Yet I knew that I had not dreamed or imagined that voice. I knew I had heard it! I closed my eyes again, and lay listening; expectant; yet, strangely awed and calmed. The voice spoke again, sweet, soft, low, clear and close to my ear.

"'Gabriel, I come.'

"I lifted my eyelids, and glanced around. Nothing was to be seen but the white-washed walls of my cell, visible in the faint light of the grated window. I called aloud. Nothing was to be heard but the sighing of the wind. I began to perceive that nothing would respond to me, while all my senses were on the alert; thus I closed my eyes for the last time and kept them closed, waiting in awe for what might next happen.

"The voice breathed once more, low, clear, flute-like:

"'Husband, I am here.'

"'Lily! Love! Wife!' I aspirated, faint with delight and awe. The sweet voice spoke no more; but as if my recognition of it had evoked the vision, this is what appeared before my sealed eyes:

"A white light, that brightened until its radiance filled the cell; and this radiance seemed to proceed from the form of my Lily, who stood in the midst of it, her face beaming with beauty, her brows crowned with orange blossoms, her hair, silver in the sunshine and golden in the shade, flowing over her shoulders, her form enveloped as in a mist in bridal robe and veil.

"As I gazed in an ecstasy of rapture that caught away my breath, the celestial vision faded away; the light paled, the cell grew dark, and I lapsed into complete unconsciousness.

"It seemed to me only the next instant that I was aroused by a shaking from a strong arm and calling from a loud voice. I started up, bewildered, to see one of the turnkeys standing over me and the sun shining through the grated window, and throwing a square of

golden light, checked with black lines, on the floor. It seemed to me that, only a second before, I had lain in the midst of a heavenly vision at one o'clock in the morning, and I lay staring at the face of the turnkey, so confounded that I could not speak.

"'What the deuce is the matter with you? Are you sick? Has the doctor given you opium, that you sleep so long and wake so dull? Get up. The prisoners are all forming to go to breakfast!' exclaimed the man.

"I sprang off my hard pallet, doused my head and face from the stone jug of water, and then followed my guard, to join the convicts on their march to the prison eating-room. But my mind was so absorbed with the thought of the vision I had seen that I could think of nothing else.

"After breakfast I was summoned to the warden's office, where I found the sheriff waiting for me with the Governor's pardon in his hand. He read the document to me, and warmly shook me by the hand, congratulating me on my deliverance, and going so far out of his routine as to say that he believed it to be an act of justice that ought to have been done a year before, when the injustice of my conviction and sentence by the Wildeville Court had been perpetrated.

"I thanked the sheriff for his kind words; but told him that I knew the great wrong which had been done me could never be righted in this world. While we were speaking, my mother was shown into the office, bearing a bundle in her hand. She greeted every one with a smile, as she took the chair the warden placed for her. The sheriff congratulated her; but she burst into tears. I knew what was passing in her mind: for, after the first shock of delight at recovered freedom, I felt that she was overshadowed by the reflection that we should always live under the reproach of my conviction and imprisonment, however undeserved it might be, and certainly was. We waited until some legal forms passed between the warden and the sheriff, and then I was informed that I was at liberty to depart.

"My mother handed me the bundle, and I retired to change my prison uniform for a citizen's dress. When I returned to the warden's office, where my mother waited for me. We took leave of the officers and left the prison.

A carriage was waiting for us with a trunk, containing all our effects, strapped behind it.

"'I have taken two places in the stage-coach that leaves at nine this morning, and it is now only half-past eight. We have plenty of time to drive to the office and get them,' said my mother, as the carriage started.

"I pressed her hand, but said nothing; my thoughts were absorbed in the vision I had seen. We reached the stage-office in due time, and got into our seats in the coach: it was crowded with passengers, but happily they were all strangers to us. Three days of travel brought us to Wildeville late in the evening. There were few loiterers around the village inn; yet, it was gratifying to see the pleasure with which they greeted my unexpected return. We did not linger to receive the congratulations of our friends, but procured the use of the tavern hack and its driver, and set out to Wildeville. It was the same carriage, the same driver, and the same road over which I had travelled little more than a year before with my bride. Then we were going away together, a happy bride and bridegroom; now I was returning a pardoned convict!

"After two hour's ride we reached the ferry, at the foot of the Eagle's-Roost Cliff, and I got out of the hack, and blew the horn, and gave the call.—'BOAT!'

"'All right!' came booming across the river in response. Meanwhile the driver took off our trunk, and set it on the ground, received the money for the use of the carriage from me, and drove off on his return road, for the hour was late.

"We stood on the brink of the river.

"It was dark; the black mountains hid all the horizon, and the few stars that twinkled but dimly reflected in the dark waters. But as we watched we saw a light leave the opposite shore, and we knew that our boat was coming. The light approached us, and soon we heard the welcome dip of oars; and soon afterward the boat was pushed ashore, and our faithful John stood up in it, saying:

"'Here I am, at your service, gentlemen,' and he held the lantern up to see who his passengers might be, but dropped it as he met my eyes, and exclaimed:

"'Great Heaven, Mr. Haddon!'

"'Help me to put the trunk in the boat, John,' I said.

"He obeyed me. When we were all in the boat, and John had taken the oars, pushed it from the shore, and was rowing us rapidly over the river, I spoke:

"'You did not expect me, John?'

"'No, sir—no more than anybody else did; but I am powerful glad to see you, sir, all the same. I tell you what, Mr. Haddon: it was a good thing for old Slaughter that the men about here didn't know as much while he was in the neighbourhood as they know now; for if they had, they'd have burnt down his Slaughter House over his head. But they didn't know anything about it until after he had gone away, and taken Miss Lily with him. Then the servants' tongues were let loose, and the way they did talk would ha' made an oyster's hair stand on end. We found out all the black-hearted old beast had done to Miss Lily, sir, begging your pardon.'

"'Where is 'Miss Lily' now?' I inquired, anxiously.

"'Lord knows, sir! The old savage took her away twelve months ago, and nobody knows where they are. But it would be dangerous for that old brute to come back here, and may be he knows it. Why, Mr. Haddon, you would only have to give a hint to have a hundred men at your heels, to burn the Slaughter House over old Slaughter's head, and *him* in it. Why, sir, the heart of the country *rages* against him for what he done to Miss Lily and you.' As my helper delivered himself of this tirade, the boat touched the shore and we landed. I was 'home again.' John helped me to carry the trunk up to the house, my mother preceding us.

"We took our old Jess by surprise, but found her as much rejoiced as astonished at our unexpected arrival at home. She prepared for us a good supper and comfortable beds; and in an hour from our entrance into the house, we had been refreshed by a wash and a meal, and we stretched our wearied frames on our beds. Conquered by fatigue, I slept until late in the morning. My mother also had slept well, but had risen early.

"This was Sunday morning. I told my mother at breakfast that I would go to church with her that day, but next day, Monday, I should commence my search for Lily. I went with her to the Old Red Sandstone

Church at the mouth of the Whirl, and engaged in the religious services there. After the benediction was given and we had left the church, we were pleased to see the number of our friends who came around us in the churchyard with greetings of welcome and congratulation. We returned home encouraged by the confidence of our friends. The next morning I arose early, intending to commence my investigations at Hill Top Hall, and at Wildeville, to obtain a clue that I might follow to a successful termination. While I was dressing there came over the river the sound of a ferry-horn, followed by the cry of:—'BOAT!'

"Knowing that John was on duty, I gave myself no trouble about this, but proceeded with my toilet. I had not finished, however, when John came in and said: 'I shall have to ask your help, sir. The party on the other side have two carriages and six horses, besides trunks and boxes, so that we shall have to take over the great flat-boat.'

"'Very well, John, I will join you in a moment,' I said, as I followed him down to the ferry-house.

"We soon got out the flat-boat and got her afloat. As we neared the opposite shore we perceived that the carriages stood at the base of the Eagle's-Roost Cliff. The foremost carriage was black and drawn by black horses. The hindmost carriage we could not see. As we touched the beach, we saw that the two coachmen on the boxes were in mourning; then that the foremost carriage contained two male passengers, also in mourning, finally that the hindmost carriage was a HEARSE WITH A COFFIN IN IT! The sight struck cold to my heart—notwithstanding that a funeral party was not so unusual a fare to take across the ferry.

"John stepped on shore and told the coachman that the boat was ready. The coachman nodded and drove upon the flat-boat. The hearse followed in the same direction. Then two mounted grooms, in mourning, paced their horses on to the boat. When all was ready, we pushed off from the shore. I gazed around on the party; but the attendants, the two coachmen, and the two grooms, were all strangers to me. I glanced at the carriage; but the gentleman within it had pulled down the curtains.

"Then I had to give all my attention to the oars. It was a labourious ferriage. We were twice the usual time in crossing the river; but we reached the home shore at last. The carriage was the first to leave the ferry-boat, and take the road up the mountain pass. The hearse was about to follow, when I went to the side of it, and inquired of the driver:—'Whose body lies within there?'

"He pointed to the coffin, indicating that I might read the inscription. Very reverently I looked in the side of the hearse and read the inscription on the silver plate. I read—Oh, Heaven of Heavens!—I read:

LILY,

ONLY DAUGHTER OF ALVAN AND ELLA VALE.

BORN JULY 15th, 18—;

DIED—

"I fell, as if struck by lightning.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THROUGH NIGHT TO LIGHT."

"THE next few weeks were a blank to me—a temporary annihilation of memory, thought, and feeling, until one dark hour, when I returned to a vague sense of misery, which could not be called consciousness, for I knew not what had happened to me, or where I was, or who I was, or whether I had ever lived before, whether I lived now, or would ever live at all. My mother often bent over me in solicitude; but her sweet old face seemed only a part of my being and my suffering, no more, nor less. I began to dream that I was something left of a man who had been cleft in two, and had his heart torn out, which seemed to account for all the weakness, misery, and helplessness of the condition in which I found myself. Gradually my brain cleared and my nerves strengthened—so gradually, that

there was no shock of recovered reason, remembered bereavement, or revived vengeance. I grew conscious I was Gabriel Haddon, thunder-smitten by the death of his wife—and that was enough. My convalescence was so slow, my mind and body were so weak, that I suffered no acute accession of sorrow, or anger, when I knew how much cause I had for both. My state was a night of heavy and dark despair, traversed by the forked lightning of a burning wrath only when I recalled the bloody part taken by Hiram Slaughter in the tragedy of my short married life!

"I brooded over the wrongs, agony, and early death of my Lily, until the spirit of revenge took such possession of my heart, that I wished to live only to wreak a terrible revenge on her destroyer, but I kept these fires of the abyss deeply covered in my soul, until I should be strong enough to send them forth on their mission of wrath and destruction. As soon as I was able to speak of the subject, I asked my mother to tell me all she knew about Lily's illness and death. She could tell me little I did not know. Lily, she said, had died suddenly at the Henrico Hotel, in Richmond, on the fifteenth of July, and her remains had been brought home and deposited in the family vault at Hill Top Hall. After the funeral, General Slaughter and his household had gone to Europe for an absence of indefinite length. I told my mother then of the celestial vision I had seen in my prison-cell, of Lily in her angel beauty on the very morning and at the very hour of her death.

"My mother was struck by the coincidence; but she assured me it was only a dream. I knew better; but I did not argue the point. I only wished that I could see my heavenly angel again. Ah! vain aspiration! How could I see her when my soul was full of dire hate, and longing for vengeance?

"Later in the summer, when I was able to creep out, I went to Hill Top Hall on a pilgrimage to the vault that contained the remains of my Lily. I knew where to find it, in the crypt, under the half-ruined chapel belonging to the Hill Top Manor. But the iron door of the vault was mortared up. I went on to the Hall to make inquiries about Lily, but the house was shut up. I knew it would be useless to go to see Oxton, General

Slaughter's overseer, for he was his master's tool, but I went to the negroes' quarters, and found old Herschel, Lily's groom. The old negro wept at the sight of me, for that revived all his sorrowful memories of his lovely mistress. I asked him if he knew the cause of his young lady's death. Yes, he knew it, he said, but Miss Lily was out of her mind, or she never would have done what she did.

"I asked him what Lily did. And he related all he knew or understood concerning my Lily's agony and death. I perceived that he did not know, or suspect, half the truth as I knew it when I was enabled to put together his narrative and Lily's story of the practices against her health and reason which had driven her to a flight from Hill Top Hall alone, through the terrors of a mountain pass, in a midnight storm. The story told by the old servant I must give in my own words:

"When General Slaughter had regained the possession of his ward, Lily Vale, he brought her to Hill Top Hall, where she arrived so ill that she had to be placed under the care of a physician. She had a terrible illness. As soon as she recovered sufficiently to be able to travel, General Slaughter took her on an extended tour. He took Herschel, the old groom, Jed, his valet, and Letty, the lady's old maid. The party went to the Virginia Springs, taking one place after another until they had visited all the medicinal waters in the mountains and valleys of the Old Dominion. But Lily did not improve in health. Her bloom was gone forever.

"In October, when the season at the summer resorts was over, the party went to New York, where, a few weeks later, they were joined by Captain Dulany. He renewed his addresses to Miss Vale, who received them as an idiot might have done, without repelling, without accepting, without noticing them. The suitor was amazed, disgusted, and withdrew his suit, and counselled the lady's guardian to call in medical advice. General Slaughter gave vent to his rage in a torrent of profanity, and sent for a physician. After the doctor had seen his patient, he came out of her room with a look of dismay which professional self-control could not conceal, and he called for General Slaughter, with whom he was closeted for an hour.

"After the doctor had gone, an earthquake shook the house. Old Slaughter stormed up and down the length of his apartments, from Miss Lily's bedroom to his smoking den, cursing and blasting and burning everybody in it. But as this happened to be a New York hotel in the metropolis, and not Hill Top Hall in the Wilderness, the old fury was interrupted in his pastime by a visit from the clerk, who came to warn him of the danger in an *un*friendly visit from the police if this noise should continue.

"Next day he engaged passage for himself and party on board the *Poland* ocean steamer, from New York to Liverpool. And in ten days they sailed. Old Slaughter cursing himself and his household, and hoping that the ship might blow up or founder before it reached mid-ocean.

"The steamer, with all on board, reached Liverpool. From Liverpool General Slaughter, with his ward and their attendants, hurried to London, where they arrived about the middle of December. Here the old despot took apartments in a first-class hotel, and left Lily in her room, attended only by her maid Letty, while he enjoyed himself in seeing all the wonders of antiquity, art, and science. But he never made a call, although he was well acquainted with the American minister, and with several Englishmen of rank.

"Early in January he took Lily and her maid Letty in a cab, saying he was going to place them in a private boarding-house. And next day he set out for Paris, taking his men-servants with him. He spent a few weeks comfortably in the French capital, and returned to London in February.

"He took lodgings in another hotel miles from the first one he had occupied on coming to London; and he did not bring Lily back; but his life was different from what it had been when he had Lily with him. He made calls and received them. He gave dinners, and he dined out. But where was Lily all this time? Her old servant did not know, and if he inquired, his ruffian master swore at him, and sent him away in dismay.

"About the first of April, General Slaughter ordered his servants to pack up to go back to America, and on the night before they left London he brought Lily back—

the whitest phantom that ever was seen. Letty was in attendance on her; but Letty was dumb in relation to the manner of life they had been leading in that private boarding-house. They went to Liverpool and embarked in the *Erin*, which sailed on the seventh of April, and reached New York on the twenty-first. In New York they were joined by Captain Dulany, who accompanied them to Richmond. The whole party took rooms at the Henrico House, where they remained from the first of May until the fatal fifteenth of July.

"Here commenced the strange conduct on the part of Lily, which her old servant ascribed to a disordered mind, but which were the effects of the drugs administered to stupefy her senses. Captain Dulany renewed his addresses to her, and she submitted to them. Her old servant, who was in the secret of her former marriage, could only look on in amazement, until he came to the conclusion that her mind was deranged. The fifteenth of July, Lily's twenty-second birth-day, was set for the wedding, which was to be solemnized in the bride's apartments, at the Henrico House.

"As Lily was incapable of superintending her wedding outfit, a modiste was called in by General Slaughter to take charge of the trousseau, which was to be elegant and abundant, as it had been decided between General Slaughter and Captain Dulany that, after the ceremony, the newly-married pair should set out on a tour through the various fashionable summer resorts of the North. During all these arrangements the visits of the bridegroom-elect, the discussions about travels, settlements and residence; the choosing of goods, patterns and jewellery; and the trying on of dresses, mantles, and hats, Lily remained as white and unconscious of all that was going on as if she had been a corpse.

"You will wonder that Captain Dulany should have wished, or consented to marry such an apathetic bride; but the old servant thought that the captain was talked into it by the general, and influenced by the fortune of the young lady. However, the marriage was a settled purpose that was to be fulfilled on the morning of Lily's twenty-second birthday. On the evening of the fourteenth of July, everything was in readiness for the wedding, the breakfast and the journey, to the packing up of

all the bride's wardrobe, with the exception of her wedding-dress and travelling-dress; as Letty, who had been hard at work all day completing the task, told her fellow-servants at tea.

"After tea arrived the fashionable modiste with the bridal veil and wreath. She expressed her desire to be shown to 'Miss Lily's' room. The old servant Herschel conducted her to the door. She went in, and after greeting the bride and displaying the veil and the wreath, she expressed a wish that 'Miss Lily' should try on her wedding-dress for the last time, to see whether it was a fit, or whether it needed any alteration.

"Lily suffered herself to be arrayed in all her bridal robes—the white satin trained dress, with its Brussels lace over-dress and Brussels lace veil and orange-flower wreath, and to be led to the glass to see the effect. She surveyed her image in the mirror, and a wan smile flitted over her white face. Letty took up the casket of jewels, the bridal present of Captain Dulany, and selected a splendid necklace of opals set in diamonds, which she attempted to clasp around her lady's neck; but with a suppressed shriek Lily pushed it away and dropped half fainting into her dressing-chair.

"Then they would have taken off her dress, but she waived them all away. Letty whispered to her that it was eleven o'clock, and the dressmaker wanted to go home. But Lily seemed too faint to answer, too faint to stand up and be undressed. Then Letty whispered to the dressmaker that she need not wait, that *herself*—Letty—could undress her mistress presently.

"The modiste took leave and went away. Letty, left alone in attendance on her mistress, waited for some sign from Lily to commence her services. The lady sat like a veiled statue. Letty approached and asked Miss Lily if she might not help her to disrobe; but the white hand flew up in deprecation of being disturbed, and fell helpless by her side.

"Letty recoiled, and sat in a low seat in the farthest corner of the room to wait the summons of her mistress. There she fell fast asleep with her back in the corner of the walls. She slept very soundly until she was aroused by a knocking at the room door, and the voice of an hotel waiter bawling that it was seven o'clock

(that being the hour at which he had been directed to rouse the party on this destined wedding-day.) Letty sprang up, collected her faculties, and hastened to her mistress, wondering whether Miss Lily had fallen asleep in her chair and slept all night, as she herself had done. Yes, apparently Lily had slept there all night. She sat in the same attitude in which Letty had left her motionless as a veiled statue. Letty called her softly. There was no answer. She called loudly. Still no answer. Letty bent and peeped into her face, and took her hand, but instantly dropped that hand again with a succession of shrieks, that brought all within hearing to the room. General Slaughter came, caught a glimpse of the bridal figure in the chair, pushed every one else aside with more rudeness than consideration, and hurried to his ward.

"There sat the beautiful form of Lily, clothed in bridal array, but dead and cold. Lily herself had passed out hours before. (She had visited me in my cell at one o'clock that morning, as I have told you.) There were wild lamentations among her negro servants. There was horror and woe in the savage bosom of Hiram Slaughter. They could see it on his face, though he opened not his mouth except to give an order that a physician should be called.

"The physician made an examination of the body, and pronounced that it had been dead for six hours. After a conversation with General Slaughter, he decided that death had ensued from softening of the brain, of months continuance, and he gave a certificate accordingly. This prevented what General Slaughter termed the useless distress of a Coroner's Inquest. The wedding was turned to a funeral. And as soon as proper arrangements could be made, the remains of Lily Vale were conveyed to Hill Top Manor, and laid in the family vault. General Slaughter had only waited to see the iron door mortared up, and, attended only by his valet, he had left Hill Top Hall for New York, *en route* for Europe. Such was the story told me by Herschel. I thanked him, and I knew Lily had been true to me through the change called death, and waited me in the higher life.

CHAPTER XIV.

"WE LOSE OURSELVES IN LIGHT."

"I WENT home. Oh, how I loathed with all my soul General Slaughter and all his demoniac race. How I longed to exterminate them. That mood of mind lasted all through the autumn and winter of my woe. Where and what is hell, Gertrude? Why, it is *here* beside us, and too often within us. We yield to the evil passions of hate, revenge, or some other form of subtle and intense selfishness, and lo! we are in hell, and hell in us. I suffered more from the passion of hate and the unsated desire for revenge than from bereavement and sorrow.

"And I wondered why all my prayers, aspirations, longings, to see once again a vision of my Lily, were never answered! I did not know that I could not find her in my evil sphere, even though 'I sought her many days with tears.' I began to regard my vision as a dream, a mere coincidence, as my mother had called it. Ah! we are so deeply sunk in materialism, that we 'will not believe though one should rise from the dead,' unless another and another could rise (*visibly*) every day to keep alive our faith. But to return.

"All through the autumn and winter I remained in the pit; but with the spring a blessed change came over my spirit. It happened in this way. I had always been an attendant on the Sabbath services of the Red Sandstone Church, but I had never gone there during the week. My poor mother was a devotee. She attended all the services of the church—the weekly services alone; but this year she had sank into age and infirmity, and I had to go with her to take care of her. It was Holy Week, the week preceding Easter Sunday. There were services every evening, when the lessons read from the Scriptures were the chapters treating of our Lord's life during the last days preceding His crucifixion, when

His few children drew nearer to Him, went with Him on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem, in and out with Him through the city, the doors of the temple, the houses of His friends, sat with Him at the last supper, went with Him to the garden of Gethsemane, followed Him to the tribunal of Pilate, and lay down in the dust at His bleeding feet on awful Calvary.

"Oh, let us touch this story with the deepest reverential love—so familiar, yet so awful. I had heard it from childhood up, yet now I listened as if I had never heard it before: for never before had it entered deeper than my outward ear and intelligence. I had been confirmed in the church, and had communed at the Lord's Supper, and had been a Christian in faith and practice from my youth up, yet never had I received the truth of the Lord's Divine Love in my soul as I received it then, when we lived over with Him those last few awful days of His earthly life. What subdued me most was the meekness in that Divine Love. It bowed down all my human pride and selfishness and self-assertion. And I put away all my thoughts of wrath and vengeance to make room for the Lord's love and meekness. Next Easter Sunday my soul had a resurrection from the death of selfishness to the life of divine love. I could see my Lily in heaven by the light of Faith. I did not need a vision of the night to show her to me. And then, when I, no longer in the anguish of doubt, invoked her presence, I found my angel again."

"Found your angel again?" breathed Gertrude, in awe.

"Yes," murmured the old man; "it was one morning early in May. I awoke at dawn of day; it was too early to rise, yet I did not want to go to sleep again; so I lay and watched the brightening of the Eastern horizon above the mountains beyond the river, and I thought it like the brightening of Truth and Love of Light and Joy over the whole world at the coming of the Lord.

"When my eyes were tired with gazing through the window, I lay in a reverie until a light appeared before me, that dilated until it disclosed within it the lovely form of my angel Lily, clothed in shining raiment, her fair brow wreathed with lilies, her bright hair flowing like a mantle of light around her, her face radiant with

joy. The glory of her presence illumined all the scene around her and showed her standing in a garden of beauty, filled with flowers, shrubs and trees, arbours, lakes, fountains, such as were never seen in this world. While I gazed in a rhapsody that almost superseded animation, the heavenly vision melted away, and I sank into sleep. I was awakened by the sun-rays shining on my face. I awoke with only a confused memory of my vision, but with trying to recall it, it came back to my mind and filled me with joy. I went down stairs and met my mother at breakfast. I told her of the vision that had passed before me in the dawn of day. She begged to assure me that it was a dream and nothing more. *I* knew that my spiritual eyes had been opened into Heaven!"

"But, Grand, how very wonderful!" said Gertrude.

"My little True, everything is wonderful or nothing is," said the mystic, reverently bowing his head.

"Did you ever see her again?"

"Yes, many times; but only when my natural eyes have been closed and my spiritual eyes opened. Often in the early morning when I first awake, I shut my eyes that I may see her and I almost always *do* see her. Often, in the silent night, when I am sleepless from anxiety, I hear her sweet voice speak to me—only one word—'Gabriel,' but in a tone of such tenderness, love, hope, that all my cares are soothed away, and my troubled thoughts rest in 'a great calm,' as did the waves at the Divine mandate, 'Peace, be still.' Sometimes when my head has ached I have felt the soft touch of her hand on my brow, and the pain has dissolved beneath it. But when I have felt that healing touch, I have neither seen her lovely form nor heard her sweet voice."

Gertrude gazed at the speaker, as she thought of the rumours she had heard from the neighbours, reflecting on the old man's sanity, and began to fear that these rumours might have some foundation. Meantime, the mystic continued: "My child, she is always near me; even when I neither see, hear, nor feel her presence. She is in Heaven, and yet with me. That is a mystery, unless we can understand it through the text, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'

"Sometimes I think when she passed through the 'golden gates,' I got a glimpse of the glory within, that has never ceased to light up my lonely life. Her so-called death was my new birth. I had passed from death unto life. I no longer cherished the merest resentment against the man whose tyranny had cut off her young life, and broken my heart. Anger, revenge, every form of selfishness passed from me then, forever.

"Even when, the following Christmas, General Slaughter came to Hill Top Hall, and filled the house with a party of men from the city, who gambled, drank, and caroused around the shrine of my Lily's mortal remains, it did not disturb my peace. General Slaughter rode miles out of his way to the lower ferry whenever he found it necessary to cross the river. In fact, I never saw his face until I saw it on his death-bed last night. My life passed on monotonously, until the fifteenth anniversary of my Lily's departure brought the third great crisis in my history."

Here the ferry-man paused, and fell into a reverie that lasted until his eyes fell on the face of the girl at his feet.

"You are a patient child, True; so now to reward you. It was fifteen years after my Lily went to heaven that my dear mother passed away, at the age of eighty years. She went off so happily that I almost envied her release. That night some of our neighbours came to watch beside the body, that, with the impress left by the parting spirit on its calm features, lay in this room as if in a delicious sleep. I chose to sit among the watchers, and I sat there until a late hour. There was a storm brewing; such a storm it proved to be as never had been seen in these parts before, and has never been forgotten. *Then* none of us imagined it was going to be more than the usual thunder-storm. But I thought of my boats, which had been neglected all day, on account of my mother's departure, and which would be in danger of being carried off, should there be any freshet in the river, such as follows a thunder-storm. I opened the front door to sally out, but I was brought to a stand by the aspect of the sky.

"Such a sky I never saw before. It was night, and it should have been dark, but it was not; for though there

was neither moon nor star, there was a sulphurous vapour, as if from the reflection of unseen fires; while above the Eagle-Roost Ridge was heaving up a mountain of the blackest, densest cloud I ever had seen.

"I gazed for a moment and hurried to the boat-houses to secure my fleet before the tempest burst. About half-a-dozen skiffs were high and dry on the sands. I got them into the boat-house, and had chained up all except the last when I heard a shout from the other side of the river—'BOAT!'

"At that moment the storm burst with a flash of lightning, lighting up all the scene, while a crash of thunder, as if a planet had burst, shook the mountains to their foundation, and a deluge of rain fell, as though all the 'windows of Heaven' had been opened and the world was to be drowned.

"When the thunder had ceased to roll, and nothing louder than the pouring rain could be heard, I seized the speaking-trumpet, put it to my lips and shouted:

"'No boat could live on the Wilde in such a night as this! It would be more than our lives are worth to attempt to cross. Take shelter in the ferry-house, and wait until the storm is over—then I will come for you.'

"'You're right!' cried the voice from the other side.

"But the sound was followed by a second vivid flash of lightning, in which the landscape blazed up as with a conflagration, while another crash of thunder shook the heavens and earth. I lighted my lantern and hung it in the window of the boat-house, as a beacon to the travellers on the other side. Then I wrapped my cloak about me, took my lantern and returned to the house. I secured all the doors and windows, changed my drenched clothing and sat down with the watchers in the room of death.

"What a contrast, that sweet calm to the wild tumult without! My spirit found repose. But all around the house—all through the mountains and forests—up and down the rivers, all through that night raged the most destructive storm that was ever seen or read of. All night the lightning blazed as if it would have set the world on fire! The rain poured as if it would again have drowned the human race!

"I thought with anxiety about the waiting travellers

on the other side. I hoped they might be safely sheltered in the ferry-house under Eagle-Roost Ridge. But good wishes were all I could give them. The awful war of the elements continued.

"Added to the howling of the wind, and the rolling thunder, reverberating echoes of the mountain passes, were now heard another sound more filled with fear than those of wind or thunder. It was the roaring of the Hurry and Whirl, raised to the force of cataracts, and tumbling down the mountain-side, carrying destruction in their course. The watchers by the quiet sleeper in the room began to mutter prayers between their lips, for the women knew as well as I did what that voice of Whirl and Hurry meant. They knew it meant an inundation of the valley. Toward morning the lightning and thunder ceased, but the rain fell in floods, and the roar of the waters filled the air.

"Fortunately, the homes of all these neighbour women watching with me, were situated higher up on the mountain, and out of danger from the waters. I reminded them of this fact, and assured them their houses, families, and goods would be safe from the flood. I knew they were thinking of danger to this house; and I hastened to assure them that I thought we were far enough from the river to be secure, as there was a rise of fifty feet from the water's edge to the house.

"Meanwhile, the tremendous roar of the falling waters continued. I went to the door and looked out. Nothing whatever was to be seen but blackness. And nothing could be heard but the roar of the waters. It was all horrible!—thick darkness, and the roar of an approaching inundation!—how near us, none could see! how soon to overwhelm us, in death, who could tell? I returned to my seat among the watchers. The clock struck three, and I said to myself that the day would soon dawn, and show us the amount of the destruction done, and damage to be dreaded. I listened to the roaring of the waters, and waited for the coming day, until a low shriek from one of the women startled me. I glanced up at her face, and from that to the object at which she was pointing. A line of water creeping in under the door. While I gazed the line crept on, became a pool. I started up, for I knew that THE INUNDATION WAS UPON US.

CHAPTER XV.

"WITH TERROR MUTE."

"THE panic-stricken women gazed at each other in horror, and looked at me in silent prayer, as if I could have saved them. The best I could do was to make the attempt. We were ankle deep in the water, that covered the floor, and that was still rising.

"'There is no immediate danger to our lives,' I said. 'This house is too strong to be moved by the flood, and too high to be overflowed. We will first go to the floor above. If the water should reach us there, we will go to the attic, which is thirty feet above the ground. The water will scarcely rise so high as that. But first we must secure *this*,' I added, going to the head of the coffin that contained my mother's remains. Two of the strongest women approached to assist me. The two other women took a lighted candle to show the way—one preceding us, the other waiting to follow. Reverently we raised the coffin and bore it up the stairs, into the front chamber over the sitting-room, and then we placed it on the bed.

"I begged the women to sit there and compose themselves, while I could go below and save the poor animals. They were uplifting their voices in a chorus of terror. I took a candle and went down stairs. When near the bottom I stepped half a leg deep in the rising water. I waded through it to the back door, and opened it. I had to push it open through the water. The cows were bellowing in fear; the poultry were screaming; the cataracts were roaring like demons of destruction.

"I waded out to the rear of the yard, which sloped upwards to the base of the mountain, it was not so deep under water as the front. I first opened the back-gate, and the doors of the cow-pen, and released the beasts, who, with tossing heads and lashing tails, rushed out, and waded through the yard to seek safety on the

mountain. I opened the hen-house door to set the poultry free; but they only screamed, and clung to the highest roost. I was obliged to leave them to their fate.

"Another voice swelled the chorus of horror; it was that of my mastiff 'Hero,' who was the predecessor of Jupiter and Juno. He had scrambled to the top of his kennel to which he was chained, and which was unsteady in the water, as if it would soon be afloat. I unchained him, and he swam after me into the house. I moved with difficulty, for the water was up to my waist. I could not close the door. My dog swam into the hall. The chairs were all afloat there. The foot of the stairs stood ten steps deep in the water. I climbed up them, (followed by Hero,) and returned to the room where the women remained watching the coffin on the bed.

"'How is the water?' fearfully whispered Miss Sibby Edwards, the eldest of the party.

"'Still rising; but not threatening our lives. We are still seven feet above it; and if it reaches us here, we can go fifteen feet higher to the attic floor,' I answered.

"'And then, if it should reach the attic we shall all be drowned! We could never sit on the roof of the house, it is too steep,' groaned the woman.

"'We shall scarcely be driven to such extremity,' I said, as hopefully as I could speak.

"I sat among them and waited for the dawn of day. I went out of the room to look over the banisters at the water, which continued to rise. I knew the hour must be near morning, but I had no way of ascertaining the time. The clock was afloat and had stopped. At last I went to the front window of the room, and looked out on the dark night. What a scene! Looking from the window of my house, seemed like looking from the port-hole of a ship at sea; for there was nothing to be seen but sky and water.

"Yet, oh joy! There was the morning-star, visible above a dispersing cloud on the eastern horizon. I knew that cloud overhung the Eagle-Roost Ridge: but for the mountain or any other vestige of dry land, I could see no more than if I had been on mid-ocean. I closed the window and went once more to look over the banisters at the water.

"Heaven be praised! it had sank a step, and was still

sinking. I told the despairing women this encouraging news; it was now certain that our lives were safe. We all now waited patiently for daylight. It came on apace, stealing through the closed window-shutters. Then I threw them open. The sun was flashing in splendour above the crest of Eagle-Roost Ridge, revealing a water view magnificent in extent. Wilde River had risen until it had filled the valley from Eagle-Roost Ridge on the east to Catamount Cliffs on the west. On the surface of the river floated, dashing, whirling, wheeling, and colliding, all manner of household wrecks—trees torn up by the roots or broken off, and cast on the waters; sheds, timbers, and doors of houses carried away and broken up by the flood; horses, cows, sheep and swine, some dead and floating, some living and struggling, that had been swept away by the inundation! I gazed on all this ruin, unable to rejoice in the firm foundation of my house, built upon the rocks strong enough to withstand the storm—unable to rejoice because of the pity I felt for these homeless sufferers whose wrecked houses and drowned cattle floated on the Wilde.

"I left the window, (where my place was taken by the women whose terror had given way to curiosity,) and went to the back-room and opened the window overlooking the yard.

"On that side the waters reached the base of the mountain, and were strewn with the wrecks of trees, houses, fences, and the bodies of animals.

"I did not see any sign of my cattle, and I hoped that they had escaped to the mountain. I saw the poultry, perching on the chestnut trees which stood with their trunks several feet in the water. They appeared disconsolate, as if waiting the peal of doom.

"I returned to my friends in the room of death. There was nothing we could do but wait for the waters to subside. I placed myself at the window, and gazed out on the devastation of the flood. I thought with anxiety about the travellers who had hailed my boat on the night before, in the storm, and who had, when unable to cross the river, taken refuge in the Eagle-Roost Ferry-House. That ferry-house was now eight feet under water. Had they fled from it in time to secure their safety? Who could tell me?

"It would be tedious to relate how slowly the waters fell to their normal level. Early in the forenoon the war of the cataracts began to subside. By noon they seemed a little louder than usual. The water fell by degrees. By noon it had withdrawn from the first floor.

"Then I went down stairs on a purveying expedition.

"Chaos met my eyes. Nearly all the furniture that had been set afloat by water lay piled up in a disorderly manner against the front inner walls of the rooms, where it had been washed and left. The floors, and the walls up to within a few inches of the ceilings were soaking wet, and the whole place was saturated with an atmosphere of dampness.

"The mahogany side-board stood fast; but every glass had been washed from it and shivered; the dishes and pans and cans from the stationary kitchen dresser had floated away and piled up against my easy-chair under the front window. The ashes on the kitchen hearth had been washed out upon the floor. The doors and windows as well as the walls of the house, had stood fast; and I blessed the memory of my forefather, who had built the foundation and superstructure of his habitation so strong as to resist the force of such a flood.

"I went into the yard to investigate there. The water had subsided and the rocky nature of the soil had left the place free from mud. The wood-pile had been dislodged and every log had been floated away. It seemed next to impossible to kindle a fire out of wet wood on a wet hearth; yet as my kind neighbours had tasted nothing since the preceding afternoon, and as it was noon, the first thing to be done was to make a fire and cook breakfast. The kitchen match-box was washed away and the matches ruined; but there was a tin match-safe in one of the upper chambers filled with matches. I got them, and collected from the attic some waste paper and a packing-box, with which I made a fire.

"By that time, Miss Sibbey had found what I was about, and hastened to take the work out of my hands. It was no part of her woman's policy to let any man meddle with the cooking while she was about, she said: but I might look up the provisions. The task was a complicated one. Our coffee-box was found washed up

into the front corner of the hall: the flour-barrel under the parlour-window, and the hams and bacon scattered, and everything damaged by the water. While my kind neighbour was preparing our breakfast, I set up the overturned furniture and put things to rights, as well as the circumstances permitted. Fortunately our parlour carpet had been taken up, and so the floor could dry more quickly. While thus engaged, the other women came with offers of assistance. And we soon restored the lower rooms to order. Then we brought the coffin down and laid it in state on the table, in the middle of the parlour floor—for the funeral had been arranged to take place on the afternoon.

"We took our breakfast in the kitchen.

"I began to be anxious for the arrival of Jess, who had been sent to Wildeville on the preceding evening to purchase some decent mourning goods, and had promised to return early this morning. It would have been impossible for her to return in the forenoon, and I began to fear it might be impracticable for her to do so in the afternoon in time for the funeral, as the worst stage of the inundation was further down the river, in the neighbourhood of Wildeville—which was most likely overflowed, if not destroyed. Ah! how could I think of my troubles, in the face of such a possibility?

"After breakfast I went out to the front to reconnoitre. The water had ebbed from my ground, which, on account of the steady slope of the river, was free from mud. The river had fallen several feet, and the roofs of my two boat-houses were visible above the waters. I knew the boats, as well as the houses were safe, and I thanked the Lord, and blessed the prudence of my ancestor, who made all outbuildings strong enough to withstand the fury of the floods. The scene was not so crowded with wrecks as it had been at an hour earlier in the day. A great number of dead bodies, trees and timbers had been swept down the river, leaving the place clear.

"A new feature had been added to the scene. The water was alive with active men in boats, trying to rescue some of the remnant of their property—the animals that floated there, still living and struggling to keep up. I hurried to the edge of the water to offer to help those men. You know, my Gertrude, there is a thick growth of

grass and water-lilies that crowd the upper part of the beach. I had reached this spot and was making my way through them, with my eyes fixed upon the busy life on the river, not heeding where I stepped, when my foot struck against some obstacle. I looked down and—immediately forgot all about the toiling men of the boats in the interest I felt in the object at my feet.

CHAPTER XVI.

A WAIF OF THE WILDE.

"THERE, nestled among the water-lilies, lay a cradle with a baby in it. I stood rooted to the ground in amazement. Then I knelt beside the cradle to examine the wonder. The outside of the cradle was wet. The inside, with its precious burden, seemed dry. In an instant the secret of the child's preservation flashed on my mind:

"The cradle, with the baby in it, must have been floated from some dwelling-house after the rain had ceased to fall, and it had not got wet on the top. As I gazed, the child opened its eyes, and seeing a kindly face bent over it, smiled and tried to free its arms; but they were too securely tucked in by the quilt that covered the bed. I noticed that the babe had dark-brown eyes and dark-brown hair; and thought it might be a few weeks old; but I was no judge of infants' ages and could not tell. In that moment forgotten were the men in the boats. I left them to rescue their dead or living cattle, the timbers of their houses, the remnants of their furniture, and gave my interest and attention to the helpless little waif at my feet. I then took up 'the cradle, the baby and all,' and bore the burden to the house. No words can describe the amazement and wild ejaculations of the women on beholding this babe. A dozen questions were poured on me at once, which I could only answer by a tale of a dozen words:

"'I have just found the child, stranded among the water-lilies.' They were all talking at once; but all the time they talked they busied themselves with ministrations to the little waif. One took the babe on her lap; another went to milk a cow who had found her way home; a third improvised a sucking-bottle by getting a small jug, putting a cork into it, perforating the cork, setting a piece of quill in the hole, and tying a linen rag over the mouth-piece. This was made ready, filled with sweetened milk and water, and put to the baby's lips before it had time to cry for hunger.

"When I saw my protégée in such good hands, I went down to the beach to see if I could help the men in the boats. The river had fallen fast. My boat-houses were now so well above the water, that I was able to reach my boats, and launch one of them, in which I rowed out to help my neighbours. I was greeted by voices from the boats, each one claiming my help for its owner. I told the men the story of the baby in the cradle, found among the water-lilies, and inquired if they could tell anything about it. They wondered at the incident; but could give me no clue to the parents of the child. I mentioned the travellers who had arrived in the midst of the storm of the previous night at the opposite side of the river. They shared my anxiety for the safety of the people, but could give me no information concerning them.

"Nor could they tell how much, nor how little the village of Wildeville had suffered by the flood. We soon became too busy in picking up half-drowned sheep to attend to anything else.

"I worked two hours with the men, and we rescued many animals and several pieces of furniture. I returned to my bereaved home to attend to the duties that awaited me there — one of the men whom I had been helping having promised me to tend the ferry, and bring over the undertaker, when the latter should arrive at Eagle Roost.

"When I entered my house, I found my waif fast asleep in the cradle, and received the information that the babe was a fine girl, five or six weeks of age. An hour later the undertaker and his assistants arrived, bringing my servant Jess, with her parcels. They reported all the lower portion of the town of Wildeville,

nearest the river, overflowed, and much damaged. The state of the roads was such, they added, as would prevent any one coming to the house, except such neighbours as lived on the Catamount Cliffs.

"Jess uplifted her eyes and voice in amazement at the strange baby and the story of its preservation.

"My poor mother had but a small funeral. We took her remains that afternoon to the Red Sandstone Churchyard, and laid them beside those of my father.

"The day after the flood and funeral, found the river fallen to its normal state, and free from floating bodies, for all that had not been recovered, had been carried down the current.

"I made inquiries in all directions concerning the parents or friends of the child I had rescued; and of the belated travellers who had come to Eagle-Roost Landing in the storm, and had taken refuge in the ferry-house there for the night.

"But all my investigations proved fruitless; and no clue to the fate of the lost travellers, or to the foundling's parentage has been discovered. I kept the waif brought me by the Wilde, and she grew to be the greatest comfort of my declining years. Such, dear Gertrude, is the true story of your adoption. Come and kiss me, my darling."

Gertrude put her arm around the old man's neck and meekly pressed her lips to his. Then the ferry-man continued:—"There was great suffering from the effects of that flood. Many poor families were reduced to poverty to destitution. The wealthy planters of the country subscribed for their relief, and soon rebuilt their houses and re-stocked their farms. No one refrained from helping them except General Slaughter, who refused to give one dollar to their relief. There is not much more to tell you of this period of your life, my little True, except this—a wonderful vision I had on the evening after I had come from my mother's funeral.

"The neighbours had restored the house to order, and returned home. Old Jess was in the kitchen, crooning a Methodist hymn. Although the month of July, the evenings in the mountains were chilly. For the baby's sake, as well as for our own, a bright wood fire had been kindled in the parlour fire-place, and I was sitting in my arm-

chair, enjoying the warmth. The baby was sleeping in its cradle, which had been drawn up near the fire, and at my right hand. Being exhausted from want of rest, I sat back in my chair, and fell into a dreamless sleep, that lasted many hours, until I awoke much refreshed.

"I was surprised to see it was near four in the morning. I had slept in my chair all night. I was not disposed to move. I closed my eyes to dream, but not to sleep. No sooner were my eyes closed upon the scenes of this world, than they were opened upon those of the other. I saw the room in which I sat, with my fireside, and the baby in her cradle; but all rarified, etherealized, touched with a halo of beauty and glory! On the other side of the baby's cradle, and opposite me, stood three angelic forms. The first I recognized as my mother, although more youthful than I had ever seen her, even in my childhood; next my mother stood my beautiful Lily, with her radiant hair, silver in the sunshine and golden in the shade; and next my Lily stood a fragile form, so like that of my Lily that it seemed a faint reflection of herself as if in a shaded mirror. As I gazed in an ecstasy of awe, the heavenly vision melted away, and the world was around me again. I never afterwards saw those three forms together again. I have seen my Lily many times, but I have never seen either of the other two. And, now, my Gertrude, I have told you how the little child of my adoption became the greatest blessing and delight of my declining years. You know what your life has been with me, my love."

"Yes, dear Grand, it has been one of the sweetest comfort from the beginning to this day," replied the maiden.

"I thank the Lord for that. But what I said was this —that as you know what your life has been with me, it would be useless to touch on the history of that long interval, between your adoption, fifteen years ago, and General Slaughter's death, which occurred last night, and of which I must now speak to you."

"Yes, dear Grand! Tell me what General Slaughter said or did to move you so deeply," said Gertrude.

"He told me on his death-bed a secret, in the life and death of my Lily, that I had never known nor suspected

before—a secret, Gertrude, that has aged me twenty years! How that old man could have lived so long with such a secret on his conscience, passes all my understanding! Listen, Gertrude, to what befell me, and what was told me last night; for that will be the end of the old ferry-man's long story, as well as the key to all that has gone before. Listen, then." The girl bent forward with the deepest attention. The old man continued:

"You know that when I left here last night, attended by General Slaughter's groom, it was storming furiously."

"Do I not remember it? Oh, I was anxious about you."

"Well, we had a rough and perilous ride up the mountain pass, through the storm, last night; but my mind was so absorbed in wonder as to why Hiram Slaughter had sent for me, after thirty years of estrangement, that I was scarcely conscious of the dangers of the way. The struggle up that mountain pass through 'night and storm and darkness,' took more time than we had calculated on.

"It was near midnight when we reached the high ledge, called Hill Top Hall. No sign of life was visible. We dismounted and went up the steps leading to the front door. Saturn knocked and left me there, in the rain, while he led the horses to the stable. After I had waited ten minutes the door was opened by the deaf mute, Gad, who beckoned me into the dimly-lighted hall, signed me to take a seat and left me. I took off my great-coat and hat, hung them on the rack, and waited for the return of the mute messenger. I think I must have waited fifteen minutes, which, considering I had been summoned in haste, to attend the wishes of a dying man, seemed a strange delay; but then every thing was slow at Hill Top Hall.

"At length the deaf mute returned and signed to me to follow him. I obeyed. He led me to the rear of the hall, opened a door on the left and admitted me into a dimly-lighted apartment. All the rooms I had seen in that house were large and depressingly obscure. I entered this gloomy apartment and saw before me the most masculine and commanding, not to say the most

severe looking woman I had ever seen. This personage, clothed in dark green, nodded, and, lifting her head until her form leaned backwards, demanded: 'Pray, my good man, are you Gilbert Haddock, the fisherman?'

"'My name, madame, is Gabriel Haddon, and my occupation that of a ferry-man, madam,' I answered.

"'Quite right. It *was* a ferry-man that was wanted, not a fisherman,' said the severe lady.

"'May I inquire whom I have the honour of addressing?' I asked. The lofty woman looked astonished at my insolence, and answered stiffly:

"'You may. I am Miss Rowley, of River Cliffs, the niece of General Slaughter.' I bowed low to the announcement.

"'My uncle has ordered you to be sent for. He has some directions to give you,' she exclaimed.

"'I am at General Slaughter's service during his illness. He *is* ill, I am led to suppose, madame.'

"'He is dying, my man,' replied the lofty woman.

"'I am sorry to hear this. Shall I wait upon General Slaughter at once?' I inquired.

"'You shall. You were sent for that purpose. Follow me.' I walked after her 'Highness' from the room into the hall, and up the broad staircase to the hall above, in the rear of which she opened a door, leading into a room that seemed to be above the one we had left. 'Come in,' she said. And we entered.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EVIL SPIRIT'S FLIGHT.

"I FOLLOWED my conductress into a vast, gloomy chamber, lighted by a wax candle in the chandelier, showing a four-post bedstead, curtained with dark-brown moreen. The bed-curtains had been looped aside for air, and between them stood a negro woman, in a white turban and dark gown, waving a palm-leaf fan. Miss Rowley bent over the invalid, gazed at him, and then lifted her head, saying:

"'General Slaughter sleeps. Come here, my good man, and sit by him, until he wakes. Then tell him that you wait his orders. He knows you by sight, and having ordered your attendance, he will not be surprised to find you here.'

"Smiling at the insolence of this lady, I bowed and took the indicated seat. Miss Rowley beckoned the nurse to follow her, and both withdrew from the room. The general was lying on the bed under a curiously embroidered silk coverlet. His head and shoulders were raised by pillows. One arm was flung over his head, the other hung down by the bedside. I raised that arm and laid it in its place and stooped to look on the face of my sleeping foe—the face I had not seen for thirty years! Seated by that bedside, I felt a cold horror creeping into my spirit. I was overshadowed by the evil sphere of a death-bed haunted by remorse, deserted by hope. So dark and deadly, so weird and unearthly was this influence, that I welcomed the wild-beating storm—the blazing lightning, the rolling thunder, and the rattling rain as things earthly, natural, familiar! I had covered my eyes with my hand, to shut out any glimpse of the sleeper's face; yet some fascination drew me to gaze at what I loathed to look upon. At length I encountered the open eyes of the dying man glaring upon me.

"'So—you've come,' he faltered, feebly.

"I bowed and drew my chair nearer to him.

"'The cordial—quick!' he gasped, changing colour.

"I saw a bottle and a wine-glass on a stand near the bed. I poured out a little of the contents of the bottle, and held it to his lips. He swallowed the cordial, and seemed revived by it; for, as soon as I had replaced the glass on the stand, he said to me:

"'I sent for you, and now,' he added, 'I do not know why I should have sent for you, and I am sorry I did it.' With this his face grew more hideous, and he relapsed into silence until I said:

"'I am told you sent for me to hear a communication you wished to make. I have come through this storm to hear it.'

"'Oh! aye, I had something to tell you, but,' he growled, 'I do not know why I should tell you.'

"'You will be guided by your own judgment, General Slaughter,' I answered.

"'I know that, you villain! I'll be guided by my own judgment. If I tell you anything, it will be because my judgment tells *me* that to do so may make things easier for me up there!' he said, pointing towards Heaven. The next instant his arm fell powerless on the bed. He had exhausted himself, and remained quiet. At length he resumed:

"'Now, if I tell you a secret, it will not be for any liking I have for you; but it will be out of regard for my own soul. Are you attending to what I say?'

"'Yes, General Slaughter,' I replied.

"'LILY VALE WAS YOUR LAWFUL WIFE.'

"'I know that perfectly well, sir.'

"'Oh, yes, you know that perfectly well, for you would have considered your runaway match lawful enough if the marriage ceremony had been performed by a magistrate or a blacksmith instead of by a minister of the gospel— That is not what I mean.'

"'What *do* you mean, if I may be allowed the question, sir?' I inquired.

"But the failing old man had wearied himself, and lay exhausted. I poured out a glass of water, and offered it to him. He drank it, and resumed his speech.

"'What I *do* mean is this: You knew your runaway marriage was considered illegal by everyone concerned in it—'

"'Except myself and my wife,' I put in.

"'And *one other* who knew better than either of you, yes. But it was considered a felony by every one else, by the constables who arrested you and your bride; by the magistrates who committed you to prison; by the jury who convicted you of the abduction of a minor; by the judge who sentenced you to two years of imprisonment. Yet, in spite of judge, jury, and law officers, you had committed no offence against God or man, and your bride was your lawful wife in the sight of heaven and earth.'

"'In the name of truth and justice, explain yourself,' I breathed. He waved his hand feebly, saying:

"'Wait. I have something else to tell you. Some

months after her separation from you, your wife became the mother of a living child.'

"'Just Heaven! this happened and you never told me of it!' I exclaimed, overwhelmed by indignation and grief.

"'Why should I have told you?' he resumed. 'You had frustrated me, and I hated you!'

"'May the Lord forgive you, Hiram Slaughter, for I fear I never can! Where is my child?'

"'Heaven knows!—I don't know. She must be able to take care of herself wherever she is, for she must be over thirty years old by this time.'

"'The child was a girl, too! thrown out, a poor, motherless, helpless girl baby, on this bitter world! 'Thirty years old now and able to take care of herself,' is she? At what age is an average woman able to take care of herself? What chance do men give her to do so? Hiram Slaughter, before you dare to leave this earth, I charge you to tell me all you know of this matter, that I may have some clue by which to seek and find my lost daughter!' I adjured him.

"'Not for your sake, you villain! not because you 'charge' me, but because I have resolved to clear my breast of it, I do so.' He faltered, glaring at me through sunken and inflamed eyes. I bowed in silence.

"Then he asked me, or ordered me, to give him another dose of the restorative on the stand. I poured out a small glass of the cordial and put it to his lips.

"He swallowed its contents with great difficulty, and began to tell me the terrible story, speaking at first clearly enough, but growing weak and disjointed and inconsequent in his discourse. Yet, from his disconnected narrative, I gathered the fact which I must now tell you in my own words.

"Ah, Gertrude, the revelations of that dying criminal were of atrocities such as I had never believed him capable, as well as I had reason to know him. The only merciful judgment in his case would be to attribute his crimes to insanity. Ancient seers might have said of such a man that 'he hath a devil.'

"This was what I learned from his incoherent utterance. It seems that when Lily Vale was orphaned by the loss of both her parents, who died of cholera within a few hours of each other at their plantation in one of

the islands of Chesapeake Bay, the grandfather, General Slaughter, was called as executor and guardian to settle the estate and take charge of the heiress. Lily was seven years old when he brought her, a stranger, to his home here in West Virginia, but she was small and shy for her age, so that when her guardian, for the sake of having a longer term of authority over her and her fortune, gave her out to be two years younger than she really was, his statement was believed.

"Lily, it is true, at that time knew her own age, but as she continually heard she was only five, she lost account of her number of years, so that on the birthday when she first came to the Ferry she told me she was six years old, as she believed herself to be, when in reality she was eight. This deception was kept up by her guardian through all the years of Lily's life, and long after she had passed her majority, so that when, by the despotism of General Slaughter, she was so reluctantly driven from her home, and forced to find refuge in a union with me, she was over twenty-two years old instead of under twenty-one, and she was of full legal age, and capable of contracting lawful marriage; thus the marriage ceremony, solemnized between us in the old Colonial Episcopal Church at Alexandria, was as legal as it was sacred, and the girl afterwards born of that marriage, was the child of law as well as of love.

"But I am getting before my story.

"You know that within a month after our marriage, we were separated by a false legal process. You now know it was only by conspiracy, deception, fraud, and perjury, that I was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to the State prison, for abducting a minor, and that Lily was restored to the custody of her guardian. But that did not end the crimes of General Slaughter. While she was at his mercy, he took her to New York, where he deadened her sensibilities by the administration of drugs, and while she was in a lethargic state, he would have married, to another man, the already wedded wife, whose husband, his, General Slaughter's, false testimony had consigned to a prison. Fortunately, Captain Dulany was cute enough to perceive her condition, and bold enough to inform her guardian that she needed a physician more than a husband. This news threw the tyrant

into a furious rage, and he not only sent for a physician, but, after having received that physician's report, he hurried his ward off to London, and concealed her in a private hospital, where, in due time, she became the mother of a little girl.

"This child he took away, and put out to nurse with a woman in London. He gave the woman twenty pounds for taking it, and promised to remit the same sum quarterly for its support; but he never gave his real name and address, and never sent any more money to the nurse, or heard any more news of the poor, forsaken child.

"As soon as possible after Lily's convalescence, he took her from the hospital and brought her to this country. He persuaded her that her child and her husband were both dead. To *her* they *were* dead, since the husband was immured in a prison, and the child was lost in London. While she was in this apathy, produced by drugs and despair, her old suitor, Captain Dulany, re-appeared, and with him General Slaughter had a talk and negotiated a marriage. Lily, half idiotic from the infernal arts practised on her mind and frame, submitted to all that was arranged for her, and there is no doubt she would have been deluded into a marriage with Captain Dulany, had not General Slaughter, from the fear that, at the last moment, she might arouse herself and resist the marriage, given her an overdose of the deadly drug, and sent her into a lethargy that ended in death. Thus he unintentionally murdered her body, and so released herself.

"With the murder of Lily the confession of Hiram Slaughter was completed. The effort of making it had prostrated him. I was about to ring for his attendants, when he signed to me to give him another dose of the elixir. When he had drank it he signed to me that I should wait. I complied, and he told me that Lily's daughter, if living, was, as his great-granddaughter and sole descendant, the heiress of Hill Top Hall, Wilde Lodge and Cave Court in West Virginia, and as the sole representative of the Vales of Stonylonesome, the heiress of Stonylonesome Island and Manor on the Chesapeake. But he said he had intended to make a will and leave all his possessions to the daughter of

Gabriel Haddon and his wife Lily Vale, and to her heirs forever.

"After adding these words, the dying man sank so fast that I rang for his attendants. His niece and his black nurse entered the room and hurried to his bedside, only in time to receive his last breath. When all was over I left the house.

"The day was breaking, and I set out on my return home. The old man's story ends here, Gertrude. There is nothing for me to do but to go to London and seek for my lost daughter. She must be a matron by this time—a wife and mother, with many children, or a widow, possibly. Or she be— No! Heaven of heavens! I will not think it! If she lives on this earth, I will find her."

"Have you any clue to seek her by, dear Grand?" inquired Gertrude.

"I have the name of the hospital in which my Lily was concealed when her child was born. It was Dr. Brown's, Church street, Chelsea, London, W. I have the address of the nurse—Jane Robinson, Clam Court, Drury Lane, London, W.C. As soon as General Slaughter's funeral is over, I shall place the ferry in charge of my trusty John, and take you and start for London. You would like to go abroad?"

"Oh! yes, dear Grand, better than anything in this world!" said the young girl, with all a girl's glee.

"Then pack up enough clothing to last us both on a two weeks' voyage. You need take nothing more, for I can give you a complete outfit as soon as we reach Liverpool."

As Gabriel Haddon spoke these words there came the sound of a horn, blown from the opposite side of the river, followed by a shout: "BOAT!"

"It is the messenger returning with the undertaker. I must fetch them over," said the old ferry-man.

Gertrude sat where the old man had left her, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes fixed on the floor. She sat lost in reverie, until she was aroused by the re-entrance of her grandfather. "Adams, the undertaker, from Wildeville, has gone to Hill Top Hall. The funeral is fixed for to-morrow. Adams and his men will be going and coming all day long," said the old ferry-man.

Gertrude took her work, and sat beside him to sew. The old man's prediction proved true. The ferry-boat was in requisition all day long for funeral duties, so that the ferry-man and his assistant went to bed worn-out. Next day was busier still, for the ferry-boats were employed all the forenoon in bringing over carriages for the funeral. At noon, Gabriel Haddon left the ferry in charge of John, and accompanied by his granddaughter Gertrude, went to Hill Top Hall to attend the obsequies of General Slaughter. They found the lawn before the house crowded with carriages, horses, men, women and children, gathered from many miles around, to pay the last respect to the oldest inhabitant of the county. The more important guests filled the drawing-room. Gertrude was provided with a seat among them, while her grandfather stood with a number of men in the hall.

Gertrude recognized many individuals in the company. The Rowleys, of Forest Lodge, the Fairlies, of the "Wilderness," and the Greenleafs, of Greenwood. The venerable Mr. Barnard, chaplain of Hill Top Manor Chapel, performed the funeral ceremonies and pronounced a panegyric on the departed; after which the remains of Hiram Slaughter were deposited in the family vault under Hill Top Chapel, and the funeral guests separated for their homes. Much wonder was expressed that no will had been found, and seemed a mooted point whether the estates of the late Hiram Slaughter would descend to his niece, Miss Rowley, or to his grandniece, Geraldine Fitzgerald, who was the wealthiest heiress in the county. The greater number of opinions were given in favour of Miss Rowley.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PASSING OF A PURE SPIRIT.

"PEACE be with you, Hiram Slaughter, restless and unhappy soul; peace be with you, insane spirit; in that grave I bury with your mortal remains, all memory of my wrongs and resentments," murmured Gabriel

Haddon to himself, as with Gertrude on his arm, he turned from the vault and left the chapel.

"He was insane, Gertrude. I am sure he was, from the one circumstance of his thinking that an act of confession and restitution would avail his soul's welfare, while there was no inward charity. But all evil livers and evil thinkers are insane; and insanity is a more widely-spread disease than doctors know," he added, as he led his companion to the front of the hall, where his gig and horse stood, waiting to convey them to the river. He took his granddaughter home to the ferry-house, where old Jess had supper waiting for them. As soon as it was over he said he felt tired, and would go to bed. He retired to his chamber. Gertrude remained below stairs a little longer to settle up some affairs, and to satisfy the curiosity of Jess, who had many questions to ask in regard to the funeral. At length, Gertrude also retired to rest. When she reached his room door, which was opposite the parlour, she listened to hear whether he seemed to want anything. She heard him murmuring to himself some verse of a hymn. These were the words that met her ears:

"At peace, dear Lord, with all the world and Thee,
No fear my soul's unwavering faith can shake;
All's well whichever side the grave for me
The morning's light may break."

"God bless him!" whispered Gertrude to herself as she withdrew, and went to her own room.

Next morning Gertrude dressed at her usual hour, and went to help old Jess to prepare breakfast. When it was ready, she waited for her grandfather.

Knowing he was sleeping later than customary, and fearing he might be indisposed, she rapped gently at his door. As there was no response, she rapped louder; as there was still no answer, she opened the door and peeped in. Something in the manner of the form that lay on the bed, drew her into the room. She crossed the floor, and stooped over the form and gazed on the face. She saw the truth in an instant. All was well with Gabriel Haddon. The "morning's light" *had* broken for him, on other lands than ours.

The shock was a tremendous one to the bereaved

child; but Gertrude never wept; her grief scarcely made itself felt; when it did, it was too deep for tears. She turned pale, and kissed the cold lips, drew the sheet over the old face, and went out quietly, and told old Jess what had happened.

Jess dropped into a chair, and stared at Gertrude a full minute before speaking. At length she exclaimed:

"You tell me, gal, as you found ole marse dead in his bed?" Gertrude nodded with a tearless sob.

"Well, Lord, it's nothing more 'n I 'spected when I see what a shock he got gwine up to Hill Top t'rough de storm to 'tend de death-bed o' that ole dyin' sinner. It's what we must all come to. 'Gone to-day, and here to-morrow,' as de ole saying says. Chile, it's took all my appetite for victuals away for dis day. Couldn't eat a mouthful o' breakfas' now if 'twas to save my soul. Now, honey, we must send John to Wildeville to fetch de doctor."

"The doctor can do no good, Jess," sighed Gertrude.

"No, honey, no harm neither—not *now* he can't. 'Sides which it's lawful for him to be sent for on such a 'casion as this; for dere'll have to be a 'quest, and de doctor might give a sittiffikit as we sent for him."

Gertrude made no objections, but sat in her grandfather's arm-chair, covering her face in dumb sorrow. Jess went into her master's room to view the body, and after a few minutes came out, dropped into a chair, threw her apron over her head, and burst into weeping and wailing—"taking on" after the manner of her race, until she had exhausted a tempest of grief.

Then she dried her tears, threw a shawl over her head, and walked to the boat-house to call John Brooks, the boat-man, to tell him what had occurred, and to send him to Wildeville to fetch the doctor. The boot-man, shocked by what he had heard, set off on his errand, while Jess returned to the house to set all things in order for the solemn occasion. But John Brooks must have spread the startling news right and left on his way to Wildeville, for within an hour after he left the ferry a crowd of kindly neighbours gathered at the house to gratify their curiosity, or to offer their services to the orphan girl. The more experienced matrons among the visitors took charge of affairs and laid out

the corpse. About noon John Brooks returned from Wildeville, bringing the doctor and undertaker.

Doctor Bell, the medical practitioner of Wildeville, made an examination of the dead body and gave a certificate to the effect that Gabriel Haddon had died from natural causes, and obviated the necessity of a Coroner's Inquest.

As soon as the doctor departed, the undertaker took measures in the solemn pageantry of death—remarking that he had little thought, when being rowed over the river by Gabriel Haddon three days previous to prepare for the burial of General Slaughter, that his next visit to the ferry would be so soon, or that it would relate to the hale old ferry-man himself. Old Jess answered him with an inverted proverb:

"Well, you know yourself, Marse Adams, 'No day can tell what a body may bring forth,' as the old saying says. Heap o' sense in dese ole sayings."

Later in the afternoon arrived the Rev. Dr. Goodwin, the Rector of the old Red Sandstone Church, and the friend of the late ferry-man. Gertrude met him with eagerness, as if in him she hoped to find comfort and strength. He laid his hand in blessing on her head and sat down with her to have a talk.

"I am your guardian by your grandfather's will, my child. Did you know it?" he kindly inquired.

"I—did not know—he had made a will," answered she.

"Yes. I have a copy of it and Lawyer Keyworth has the original. It may be premature to speak of this now, and I only mention it that you may know you have a friend and guardian in me whom you may trust as a child trusts in her father," said the old minister.

"Thanks, dear Dr. Goodwin. It is another proof of my beloved grandfather's wise affection for me that he should have given me such a guardian as yourself; another proof of your 'loving kindness and tender mercy,' that you should so willingly accept the trust," said Gertrude. The minister pressed her hand while talking to her. Then telling her that he had assumed the full direction of all affairs relating to the burial, and promising to see her again early next morning, he took leave. The funeral took place on the third day after the

death, and was more numerously attended than that of General Slaughter had been.

Dr. Goodwin read the burial service of the Episcopal Church in an impressive manner; but *he* pronounced no panegyric on the character of Gabriel Haddon, nor did the old ferry-man need such a testimonial. His memory was fresh in the hearts of his neighbours, whom he had loved more than himself, and only less than he had loved the Lord.

Dr. Goodwin and Lawyer Keyworth accompanied Gertrude to her desolate home, for the purpose of reading Gabriel Haddon's last will and testament. It was late in the afternoon when they arrived; but the sun had not gone down.

The household, consisting of Gertrude Haddon, the orphan, Jessie Bell, the housekeeper, and John Brooks, the boat-man, were called together in the parlour of the ferry-house, and directed to seat themselves around the table. When all was ready he commenced to read the will. It was short, simple and clear. It was dated about a year previous to the death of the testator, who, after leaving a legacy of five hundred dollars each to his housekeeper, Jessie Bell, and his boatman, John Brooks, bequeathed the whole residue of the testator's real and personal estate, consisting of two hundred acres of land with dwelling-houses, offices, boat-houses, boats and piers, known as Haddon's Ferry, to his beloved friend Samuel Goodwin, Rector of Red Sandstone Parish, in trust for his, the testator's daughter, Gertrude, and her heirs forever. The will was signed, sealed, and witnessed. The witnesses were Royal Greenleaf of Greenwood, and Luke Barbar, of Falling In.

These gentlemen being engaged in attending court at Wildeville, were not present at the reading of the will, but were easily to be found if wanted, as Lawyer Keyworth explained. Mr. Keyworth shook hands with the heiress, telling her that he could congratulate her on her inheritance of an estate yearly gaining in value, and some day to become a large fortune. Gertrude bowed in silence. She could not reply. He congratulated the two legatees on their late master's liberality and their good fortune. John Brooks sobbed out that he would rather have had his old master than all the money in

the world. Jessie Bell chimed in with her inverted wisdom:

"'Wings take riches and fly away,' as the ole saying says. Heaps o' sense in them ole sayings."

"Gertrude, my dear, I must speak to you of your own affairs now. You know that I have only a sad widower's home to offer you at the Rectory. I have lived without ladies' society, ever since my wife departed, and my daughters married and left me. I would gladly bring you home with me, but a girl of your tender age requires the guidance of a wise, matronly gentlewoman."

"I have never had it," murmured Gertrude. "No, nor never wanted it while my Grand lived," she added.

"No; Haddon was a man among a thousand men, capable of filling the place of father and mother to you. I am not so. Therefore, you must live among ladies; I feel it to be my duty as your guardian to provide you with such a home. Have *you* any suggestion to make as to your future home? If so, speak freely. I wish to consult your inclinations," said the old minister.

"I thank you very much, dear Dr. Goodwin, but all this has happened so suddenly I have had no time to think; and I am very loath to leave this place where I have lived with my dear Grand all my life. Might I not live here? Might not Jess keep house, and John work the ferry as before? Would these faithful servants not be a sufficient protection to me under your supervision?" pleaded Gertrude.

The aged minister reflected for a few moments; then he replied: "No, that will not do. The man and woman may remain here—the one to look after the house, the other to run the ferry; but you must not live her alone, with only servants for your companions. You are fifteen years old, and could well bear a few years of schooling. I have a plan in view for you——"

"Oh, dear Dr. Goodwin! *don't* send me to boarding-school among strangers. In losing my dear Grand, I have lost all! But let me stay here, where he lived, where everything is so full of his presence that he seems to be not quite gone away! Let me stay here, if not in this house, in this neighbourhood. *Don't* send me away!" prayed Gertrude.

"I have no intention of doing that, or of doing anything objectionable to you. I have a plan, subject to your own approval. After leaving you yesterday I called at Greenwood to see Miss Greenleaf. You know that lady?"

"Only from having seen her at the ferry many times. I have rowed her over the river. But I have never seen her at any other time or place, and I have never been to Greenwood. So I can scarcely be said to know her."

"She knows you, my dear child; and esteems you highly. I called on her yesterday. She had heard of your grandfather's departure, and she inquired kindly about yourself; and when I told her of my position as your guardian, and my embarrassment about finding a home for you, she *eagerly* proposed to receive you at Greenwood, as a sister to her niece, Patricia. It seems that when Miss Patricia left boarding-school, on the first of this month for the midsummer holidays, it was decided she should complete her education at home. Miss Greenleaf thinks you would be a desirable companion for Patricia, and would have a beneficial influence on her. What do you think of the plan? I leave it all to yourself."

The heart of Gertrude quailed within her. To go to Greenwood as the "sister" of Patricia Fitzgerald!—Pat Fitzgerald, or Pat Fitz.—the fast girl of the neighbourhood!—at whose name all well-conducted ladies turned up their noses; who was reputed to have been expelled from school for boxing the principal's ears.

"Well, my dear child, what have you to say?" inquired the rector.

"My dear guardian, what do *you* advise? If you will not decide for me, you will advise me," she answered.

"I think the opening a providential one for you. Miss Susan Greenleaf is, perhaps, a little too romantic for a practical world like this. In all else, she is a Christian lady."

"Miss Patricia—" Gertrude began, and then hesitated. She could not bring herself to utter one word reflecting on another. Her guardian finished the question for her.

"Is reported to be fast, you would say? My child, a girl like yourself, brought up in the school of Gabriel Haddon's philosophy, will never condemn a sister-

maiden on common rumour. I have known Patricia Fitzgerald from infancy. She is a wild, brave, true-hearted little creature, with the promise of a noble womanhood in her, which will be fulfilled if she be well influenced. I expect great good from your association with her."

"Do you think my dear Grand, if he were living, would approve of my going to Greenwood?"

"My dear Gertrude, I am sure that he *does* approve of it. Be practical in your faith. Remember that though his presence is no longer with you, he *does* still live; speak of him always as living," said the rector, cheerfully.

"Yes, I *do* know; only sometimes I forget to speak as I know. I will go to Greenwood, for now I think of it, my dear Grand *would* like to have me go wherever I could do most good, if it is given to such as I to do any good at all."

"Can you be ready by to-morrow morning?"

"Oh! yes, sir—and—may I come here once a week to look at my poor old home?" she asked.

"As often as you please. You will find no hindrance from me or Miss Sue Greenleaf. I will come for you at ten o'clock to-morrow. You need not take a trunk of clothing with you. Everything else that you would like to remove can be afterwards brought away in a waggon."

"I shall want to remove nothing but necessary clothing. I grieve to remove myself. I shall leave everything else as dear Grand left it in the old home, hoping some time to return and live out my earthly life in it," said Gertrude.

"As you please, my dear, though I hope that for you some brighter fate in the future may win you away even from this sweet old home," said the minister, kindly.

But his voice was lost in the crash of thunder following a sudden blaze of lightning that lit up the room.

"We are going to have another heavy storm. Come, Dr. Goodwin; we must hurry away," exclaimed the lawyer.

"Yes. We must try to reach Wildeville before the rain falls. Good-night, Gertrude. I will be punctual

to-morrow at ten. God bless you, my dear. Come, Keyworth."

With this the two gentlemen departed. Gertrude dropped into her grandfather's chair, and strove to bear the grief that seemed crushing her. The storm gathered darkly over the scene; the lightning flashed, and the rain came down like a deluge. Yet, Gertrude sat there, through all the storm, till aroused by the blast of the ferry-horn and the cry wafted across the water:—"BOAT!"

The call was too familiar to Gertrude to arouse the least curiosity, although it awoke her to duty and action. Yet, if she could have imagined how fraught with fate to her that summons was. But we never know when the hour of destiny strikes on the dial of our lives.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE BRINK OF FATE.

AT the blast of the horn and the sound of the voice, Gertrude hurried into the kitchen, where she expected to find John Brooks, the boatman. Jess was there, getting supper, but John was nowhere to be seen. Gertrude looked all around and then inquired:

"Jess, where is John? There is some one on the other side of the river shouting for the boat."

A flash of lightning and a crash of thunder interrupted for a moment the cook's answer. She then replied:

"Laws, honey, John Brooks, he done gone up de mountain to get dry brush for kindlin' wood, and bein' cotched in de storm, I reckon os how he done stopped in Charley Charcoal's cabin till it's all ober; neber 'spectin' as anybody'd be like to want de ferry-boat in sich wedder as dis; dough no one can tell what some people might want. Who you s'pects wants de boat now?"

"How can I guess who wants it, Jess? Some traveller, I suppose," answered Gertrude, uneasily.

"B-O-A-T!" shouted the voice from across the river, the sound reverberating through the house.

A blaze of lightning and a crash of thunder followed. "I must fetch the travellers over the river," said Gertrude, and she left the kitchen to prepare for the trip.

"Don't you do no sich a thing, honey," cried old Jess. "Don't so much as dream o' doin' it. It's dark outside and de storm's awful enough to scare de debbil! Don't you go. Ef people ain't got no more sense 'an to go out in a storm like dis, let 'em take de quinsequences, *I* say," continued the old woman.

But Gertrude had lighted a candle and put it in the lantern, and had drawn on her overshoes and was now wrapping herself up in her waterproof cloak.

"B-O-A-T!" shouted the voice from across the water.

"I am left in charge of the ferry, Jess. It is my duty to go, and I must do so?"

"B-O-A-T!" shouted the voice.

"Drat your throat! I wish it was split," cried the old woman, in a rage.

The lightning blazed, the thunder rolled, and the rain fell.

Gertrude drew the hood of her waterproof cloak over her head, and took the lantern.

"Don't be distressed about me, Jess. I have been on the river in worse storms than this. I am doing my duty —and I shall be safe—yes, safe," she added to herself, "safe, even if I go to the bottom, quite safe!"

"Well," exclaimed Jess, "I'm glad o' one thing—this is like to be the last time as you'll have to go on sich an improper errand for a young gal, which I's rale sorry to part wid you, I's right glad you's gwine to Greenwood to lib like a lady long o' Miss Sukey Greenleaf, dat I am."

Gertrude went out into the storm. The wind was blowing a hurrican; the rain pouring in torrents; the night dark as pitch. The brave ferry-girl struggled on until she reached the boat-house. One moment she paused to recover her strength, wind, and senses, but the next she was aroused by the reiterated shout of—"B-O-A-T!"

There was a lantern attached to the end of the boat-house nearest the water, and a speaking-trumpet hung

beneath it. Gertrude took the trumpet, put it to her lips, blew a blast, and then called out:—"Who and what want to cross? What sort of a boat will be needed?"

A broad sheet of flame lightning, and a heavy crash of thunder, delayed the reply, but at length it came.

"Two men and two horses—the flat-boat."

Gertrude had not strength to pull the flat-boat across the river, in calm weather, much less in such weather as this. For a minute she did not know what to reply. She raised the trumpet to her lips, and shouted:

"I am coming." And with this answer she launched her boat, and taking the oars in her hands, struck out upon the turbulent waters. In fifteen minutes the keel of the boat grated on the sands.

Gertrude drew in her oars and stepped out. It was dark, for the light on the ferry-house only irradiated a few feet, while the lantern the girl carried, shot but one ray where its bull's-eye was turned. A dark figure came to the water's edge to meet her. A sweet voice said:

"I hope you have brought the flat-boat, my good man."

"There was no man at the ferry when you blew the horn, and I could not manage the flat-boat," said Gertrude, "I hope this will do for you and your companion. The horses can swim after the boat if you will take their bridles in your hands."

"A woman!" exclaimed the same mellow voice. "I beg you will forgive me. I could not see you in the dark."

"Only a girl, sir," answered the maiden, shyly.

"Is it possible that you have brought the boat across the river through this storm to-night without assistance?"

"It was impossible to procure assistance, sir; but it was not so difficult to row across the river, else I could not have done it. Will you get into the boat? It rains harder than ever, I think."

"I am keeping you out in it. I will get into the boat. Simon, bring the horses on," said the stranger.

The other man, who seemed to be the servant of the first speaker, came to the water's edge leading two saddled horses.

"Take the saddles off and throw them in here; but leave the bridles on and keep them in your hands when you get into the boat, so the horses will swim after us," said Gertrude.

"You seem to know all about it," said the stranger.

"I have lived at the ferry all my life, and I have been used to boats ever since I can remember," said the girl.

The servant-man stepped on board, keeping the ends of the bridles in his hands. Gertrude took up the oars to push off the boat, but the stranger took them from her, saying:

"No, this is my task, rather than yours. I am an 'indifferent' skilful oarsman, and can take you across safely."

Gertrude did not dream of resisting the decision made by that deep, firm voice. She merely murmured:

"I thank you, sir," and yielded the point.

The boat was heavier than before; the swimming horses often pulled on the bridles, impeding progress; the water was rough; the wind blew a gale; the rain dashed in their faces; and lightning and thunder added their horrors. But the oarsman pulled for twenty minutes, and pushed the boat up high and dry upon the sands of Haddon's Ferry.

Before the stranger could step from the boat a dark form, carrying a lantern, ran down through the rain to meet them. It was John Brooks, the boatman.

"Good Lord, Miss Gertrude! Is this you come back safe? I have been that mis'able about you. Why, if anything had happened to you—well, there. I should a gone and heaved myself down to the bottom of the river. I only this minute got back home, and Jess told me how you'd gone across the river to fetch a passenger, and I took the lantern and run right here, intending to launch a boat and go after you; but here you is safe, thanks be to goodness."

"Yes, we are all safe, John. Just secure the boat and come up to the house, and show this gentleman's servant where to put his horses," said Gertrude.

Turning to the stranger, she said, with a sweet courtesy:

"I do not know how far you may have to travel, to-

night, sir; but I hope you will come up to our house and stop until the storm is over."

"Thanks, my child—Miss—Miss—"

"My name is Gertrude Haddon, sir."

"Thanks. Mine is Gerald Fitzgerald. I gratefully accept your kind invitation."

"Come then. Our boatman here will help your groom with the horses," said Gertrude, leading the way from the pier to the house. The stranger stepped after her, hoisted an umbrella, and held it over her, saying:

"I am afraid that this will do you but little good now. You must be thoroughly wet already."

"Oh, no; my waterproof cloak is really *water-proof;* if I were wet, it would do me no harm. I am a ferry-girl, consequently amphibious and as much at home in one element as on the other. Here we are at the house. I thank you for your umbrella. Please walk in," said Gertrude.

The stranger followed her. Gertrude closed the door on the storm and turned to speak to her guest. He had just taken off a black slouch hat and a rubber riding-cloak and hung them on the rack, and now he stood before his hostess, the grandest being she had ever looked upon.

He was so perfectly proportioned, that no one ever realized his unusual height, until he was seen among other men. His head was finely shaped, and well-set; his features were of the Roman type, with high forehead, aquiline nose, short upper lip, well-moulded mouth, and finely curved, projecting chin. His complexion was dark, his short curled hair and beard and eyebrows were black. His eyes were of darkest grey, deep set, steady, with a peculiarity of a fixed look, which was not a stare, but a wistful, half-unconscious gaze. His air and motions were majestic. His voice was deep, firm, yet not peremptory. He was clothed in black. Gertrude gazed up at him with the innocent admiration of a child, until she met those dark eyes fixed on her. Then she dropped her lids in confusion, and turned and opened the parlour door, saying:

"Come in here, if you please, sir."

The stately stranger followed her. Gertrude drew forward her grandfather's arm-chair, and invited her

guest to take it. The stranger thanked her, and sat down.

The tramping of horses and the voices of men were heard, as the groom and boatman led the steeds to the house and to the stables in the back-yard. Gertrude went into the kitchen to speak to the cook to add some dainty to the tea-table in honour of their guest. The evening meal was ready on the hearth, and only waiting the orders of the young mistress to be placed on the table.

"Jess, there is a gentleman in the parlour who was caught in the storm," said Gertrude.

"Same one you fetched over de ferry?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Jes like dis was a tavrun? Ebery riff raff as gets caught out in bad wedder crossin' de ferry gets fetched here to board and lodge free gratis for nothing, long as ebber he wants to stay."

"It was my grandfather's way, Jess," said the girl.

"And a mighty bad way! Better kept a tavrun at wunst and den he'd a got paid for entertainin' man and beast. But dis yere keepin' open house for eberybody is jes' ruinous. 'Wilful want makes woful waste,' as de ole sayin' says. Heap o' sense in dese ole sayin's. I ain't got no patience with sich sponging riff raffs."

"Jess, Jess, this is a gentleman, I tell you."

"Gem'an, is he? Oh, yes! purty gem'an, come here spongin' on a poor orphan gal for his supper!"

"Jess, I am ashamed of you! But you are not yourself," said Gertrude, in distress.

"Well, if I ain't myself, who is I? And who is de purty gem'an in de parlour? I bet yer don't know his name."

"Yes, I do," said Gertrude, patiently. "He introduced himself to me as Mr. Gerald Fitzgerald."

"Eh! what! hush; honey! Come get up here. You don't mean Colonel Fitzgerald?" exclaimed Jess.

"I don't know, Jess. The gentleman named himself simply as Gerald Fitzgerald."

"Dat's him. Well, Lord! wonder if he was spected to-night? Let me run down de cellar and fetch up dat trout John Brooks catched dis ebenin', and den I'll knock

up de most delicky omelette as ebber went inside ob anybody's mouf. You entertain de colonel, and leave dis to me, and in 'bout half an hour I'll send you in de mos' 'licious supper as ebber you, or him eider, sat down to. Nuffin's too good for *he*," exclaimed the cook.

"Jess, who is Colonel Fitzgerald? I never saw him before?"

"Hi, what I tell you? He's Colonel Gerald Fitzgerald, dat's who he is. Now don't bodder me any more, 'case yer see I got my hands full. You go inter de parlour and entertain de colonel, like a lady."

Gertrude took off her waterproof cloak, and hung it up to dry, and stood in her morning dress of black bombazine, relieved by white linen edging at the throat and wrists.

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE.

THEN she returned to the parlour where she found Colonel Fitzgerald standing before the book-case in the corner, reading the titles of the books.

"You have a very choice collection of books here," he said, turning his dark eyes full upon hers.

"A very small collection, sir," answered Gertrude.

"But a rare one. Here are some of the works of the best authors, in Greek, Latin, German, French, Spanish. They are well worn. Will you permit me to inquire who reads all these works?" he asked.

"My grandfather and I used to read them in the winter evenings when the river was frozen over and we had nothing to do," answered Gertrude.

"Your grandfather and—*you?*" said Gerald Fitzgerald, gazing at her fixedly.

"Yes, sir; we had so much leisure in winter, grandfather and I. He would read and I would knit or sew;

but when his eyes were weak, I would read and he would smoke."

Gerald Fitzgerald gazed at her in surprise.

"My dear child, do you mean me to understand that *you*, at your age, have mastered all these languages so as to be able to read these authors in their originals?"

"Grandfather taught me, sir; and we had *so much* time on our hands in the winter," said Gertrude.

"But do you know you have achieved a great work in having learned all these languages, so as to be able to read them at your age? You cannot be more than fourteen years old."

"I am fifteen," said Gertrude.

"And you really read Sophocles, Homer, Kant, Camoens, and Corneille, in their originals."

"Yes, sir; grandfather taught me. After learning Latin, it was easy to learn French and Spanish, for they are so closely akin—don't you think so, sir? And German seems so much like rugged English, that *that* did not seem difficult either," pleaded Gertrude.

"But the Greek?" said Fitzgerald, with a smile.

"Oh, the Greek is such a god-like language! Grandfather so delighted in it! It was more recreation than a task to study Greek with grandfather!" cried Gertrude.

"What else did grandfather teach you, my dear?"

"Oh, history, geography, a little astronomy; and he tried to teach me mathematics, but it was so difficult for me to understand that he said it only distressed me, that I had no mind for it, and he gave it up."

"Where is this dear grandfather, my little girl? Shall I not have the pleasure of seeing so wise a man, so finished a scholar?" inquired Fitzgerald.

Gertrude paused, and then answered reverently: "He is in heaven now."

"Oh, my dear child, I did not know that you had lost him," said Fitzgerald, in a tone of regret.

There was a pause, and Gertrude answered gently:

"But I have not lost him. I do not feel it so."

The door was pushed open, and Jess entered with a tray, laden with supper, which she arranged upon the table.

"Will you please to sit down and take supper, Colonel Fitzgerald?" said Gertrude, with gentle courtesy.

"Thanks, my kind hostess; a ride of seventy miles since breakfast has prepared me to enjoy this delicious meal," answered the colonel, as he took a chair at the table.

Gertrude did the honours of the board with a simple grace that was all her own. When the meal was over, Fitzgerald opened a window and looked out upon the night. The sky was clear, and the stars were shining.

Jess cleared the table, carrying the remnants of the meal to the kitchen for the refreshment of herself and the two men, who had come in from the stable.

"My gentle hostess," said Fitzgerald, "I must take a pilgrim's leave of you. Having been rested and fed, I must go. Can you tell me where I shall find my servant?"

"He is in the kitchen getting his supper. Will you not let him have time to finish?" inquired Gertrude.

"Certainly," replied Fitzgerald, seating himself.

"Would you like to look over some of grandfather's books, sir? If you would, I will get you the key of the book-case. It must be dull for a gentleman to wait here," said Gertrude.

"I do not think so. No, thanks, my hostess; you need not open the case; I do not care to look at the books now," said Fitzgerald.

His servant did not keep him waiting long. Simon soon dispatched his supper. Perhaps the man did not find the maid so attractive as the master found the mistress. Simon knocked at the door, and put his head in to ask orders.

"Have the horses been well rubbed down and fed?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald.

"Yes, sir, *and* watered," answered the man.

"Very well; then saddle them and bring them around to the front-door," said the master.

The man touched his forelock and withdrew. Colonel Fitzgerald walked about. He did not know whether at this ferry-house he had been received as a visitor or a customer—whether by offering payment he should offend his hostess, or by refraining from doing so he should wrong her. He did not know whether the ferry-house

was not a sort of inn, and whether the livelihood of the family did not depend on both sorts of custom.

He looked at Gertrude, but her meek face afforded no solution to the question; one thing he did perceive—that he must not venture to offer *her* payment for his entertainment. Gertrude was standing by the window, wondering why her guest walked about the room in such an uneasy manner.

Presently a happy thought entered the mind of the traveller. He turned towards his hostess and inquired:

"Will you permit me to step into the kitchen for a moment?"

"Certainly, if you wish," said Gertrude; "though you need not hesitate to light your cigar here, if you prefer it. Grandfather always smoked after tea," she added. Fitzgerald smiled kindly on her, and passed into the kitchen. John Brooks had gone out to the stable to help Simon to saddle the horses. There was no one in the kitchen but Jess.

"My good woman, I wish to speak to you," said Colonel Fitzgerald.

Jess sprang up as if she had been only sixteen instead of sixty, dropped several courtesies, and then stood waiting.

"Hold out your hand."

Jess extended a black paw big as a bread-tray.

"Here," said the colonel, placing a gold piece in her palm.

Jess courtesied deeply half a dozen times, and inquired:

"I beg a tousin pardon, Marse Colonel, but if you please, sir, what's dis fur?"

"To pay for our excellent entertainment," said the colonel, beginning to think he had made a mistake.

The action of the woman assured him that he had. Jess, forgetting all she had preached to her young lady some hours before, dropped the gold coin as if it had been an asp, and exclaimed:

"I begs ten tousin pardons, Marse Colonel, but me and my young mistress don't demean ourselves by keepin' no tavrun. Me an' my young mistress makes you welcome to your entertainment, Marse Colonel Gerald Fitzgerald."

"I have erred, then. Pray excuse me. Ferry-houses are almost always hotels as well."

At this moment Simon came into the kitchen to report that the horses were ready.

"Here, you nigger, pick up dat dere gole piece as yer master jes drapped," said Jess, pointing to the 'eagle.'

Simon recovered the coin, and put it into his pocket—not, let it be understood, with any design of theft, for Simon Styles was often the purse-bearer of his master. Gerald Fitzgerald smiled at the outburst of self-respect from this obsequious old servant, and looking at her more attentively, he held out his hand, exclaiming:

"Why, Aunt Jessie, is this you? I am so glad to see you! I did not recognize you at all. Why, I thought—"

"You t'ought how de debbil had got me long ago, I s'pose, Marse Gerald; but he ain't, and he ain't agwine to get dis chile, neither; no, not ef I knows it."

"I am glad to see you, Jessie; why didn't you make yourself known to me at once?" inquired the colonel.

"Who! Me? I wouldn't a 'sumed to do it, Marse Gerald. I jes lay low and say nuffin, and see how long it take a great hero like Colonel Fitzgerald to 'member his old black mammy."

"That was unkind, nurse. I knew you as soon as I looked attentively at you; though it has been a long time since I saw you, Jessie."

"Ain't it, dough, Marse Gerald? I ain't seen you sense dat fus year you went to Wes' P'int to be a millinary gaddet. You was a slim young ge'man den, and didn't you look handsome in your new deform! Hush, honey."

"Come, come, Jessie!" exclaimed the colonel.

"But, Lor! dat was nigh on to twenty years ago; and now dey do tell me as you fit t'rough all the Flidy War and de Mestico War, and comed out a great hero. Is that so, Marse Colonel?"

"Nonsense, Jessie. I have been in Florida, and I have been in Mexico; got an ugly sabre cut across my temple, and a pair of colonel's shoulder-straps; that is all. How long have you been living at the ferry?"

"Hi, Marse Colonel, ebber sense your fader set me free to please you, when you went to Wes' P'int to be a

millinary gaddet. Soon's ebber I was free I hired myself to ole Marse Gab'el Haddon, and been libbin' long ob him and his granddaughter ebber sense, till he died sudden day before yesterday. He was buried to-day. May be you didn't know dat, Marse Colonel?"

"No, I did not."

"Yes, buried to-day. He lef' me and John Brooks money enough to keep us all our libes; but we'd a heap radder had our ole Marse dan all his money," said Jess.

"Is the young granddaughter left to live here without a guardian?" inquired the colonel.

"Lor', no. De Reberent Dr. Goodwin is her garden and gwine to take her 'way to-morrow. So you won't have *she* to row you ober de ferry no more."

"I am very glad of it, Jessie. Her position here is a cruel one for a young girl scarcely past childhood. Well, good-night, my old nurse. I must go."

"Good-night, Marse Gerald, and de Lord bress you."

Colonel Fitzgerald returned to the parlour, and found Gertrude standing before the window, lost in reverie.

"Before I leave, I wish to thank you, my brave and gentle little heroine, for the great services you have performed for me to-night," he said.

"I did nothing, sir, but my simple, daily duty, and do not merit thanks," replied Gertrude, meekly.

"No? Why, my dear girl, what could I have done, if you had not brought the boat over to me through the storm. Though if I had known that my call would have brought out a fragile girl, like you, to risk her life to-night on the Wilde, I would have died rather than have sent that summons over the water," said Gerald Fitzgerald, tenderly, as he held her hand and lingered near her.

"I feel sure you never would have called the boat if you had known that there was no one but me to take it over to you, and I am glad that you did *not* know it," she added, with a smile.

"Why, so am I. As it has turned out. Though I may never see you again, Gertrude, it is worth much to have seen and known you, if only for a few trying hours and to have the memory of those hours, forever," he added, as he pressed her hand.

The next instant he was gone. Gertrude remained standing by the window, lost in a reverie, that lasted

until she was startled by the sound of his horse's hoofs, as he galloped from the house. Then with a sigh for which she could have given no reason to herself, she began to look around for the household duty that lay nearest at hand.

She heard John, the boatman, bidding good-night to Jess.

Her duty was apparent—to fasten up the house for the night. While she was bolting the window shutters, Jess, having raked out the evening fire and shut up the kitchen, entered the parlour.

"So Colonel Fitzgerald has gone?" she said.

"Of course. He went as soon as the storm was over," answered Gertrude, in a low, hesitating voice.

"I wonder if he was spected. Lord! to think of dat now!"

Gertrude was filled with curiosity, yet she could not bring herself to make inquiries. She turned to leave the room.

But Jess was in a communicative mood.

"And to think," she said, "that he was not at de funeral. He, ob all de people on de yeth, as should a been dere! de chief mourner and maybe de heir-at-law!"

Gertrude showed no sign of interest. Jess seemed provoked and fired her great gun:

"Well. I S'POSE HIM AS DISAPP'INTS A BRIDE AT A WEDDIN' MAY BE SCUSED FOR DISAPPOINTIN' A CORPSE AT A FUNERAL. DERE!"

"Jess! What did you say, Jess—what are you talking about?" exclaimed Gertrude, putting down her candlestick.

"I t'ought I'd wake you up at last. Yes, honey! Marse Gerald Fitzgerald went back on weddin' and funeral alike; dough ef anybody say as he was to blame—dey tells a black false—dats all."

"I don't understand you, Jess! I *cannot* understand you. What *do* you mean? Who is this Colonel Fitzgerald, whom you seem to know all about? And—*who 'went back,'* as you call it, on both wedding and funeral? Surely not Colonel Fitzgerald!" said Gertrude.

"Well, honey, it was jes' *he* an' no oder. Which, if anybody say he did wrong, I say dey tells a black false. 'Caze ebery fing as Marse Gerald does *must* be right."

"But Jess, *what* funeral do you mean? and *what* wedding, and *who* is Colonel Gerald Fitzgerald? I ask you."

"Honey, Colonel Gerald Fitzgerald is the grandson of old General Slaughter's half brodder; and failin' ob General Slaughter's childun and grandchildun, he is de heir-at-law of General Slaughter's landed 'states dough he nebber 'peared at de funeral as chief mourner. But dere was somefin queerer 'n dat. He was 'gaged to be married to his cousin, Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald, and when de day come he wasn't dere. Now, what you fink o' dat?"

What did she think about that? More thoughts than she could have expressed. She answered:

"The death of General Slaughter was so sudden, and the funeral followed the death so quickly, that I do not wonder that Colonel Fitzgerald should have received notice of it too late to attend. But I cannot imagine why he should have failed to keep his appointment at his wedding."

"No, honey, nor no one else; and dat's jus' where de mystery is now. Which, ef anybody goes for to say as Marse Gerald did any fing wrong, dey tells a black false, 'caze whatebber Marse Gerald does is dezactly right."

"Jess, I did hear a report that Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald was going to marry her cousin, a gentleman of the same name, and that the marriage was postponed on account of General Slaughter's death. But do you say that *this* Colonel Fitzgerald was—was the bridegroom-elect?"

"Yes, honey, he was. I heerd all about it to-day from the coachmen and oder servants as come here driving and waiting on deir master's to *our* funeral. Lord, chile, it *wasn't* Gen'al Slaughter's death as put off de weddin'. Dat weddin' was put off 'fore ebber Gen'al Slaughter t'ought about dying! Dat weddin' was put off by de non-'pearance ob de bridegroom!"

"But, Jess, you do not mean to say that Colonel Fitzgerald failed to keep his appointment with his bride-elect on his wedding-day," exclaimed Gertrude.

"Yes, dat's dezactly what I means to say."

"But whatever could have been the reason for a

gentleman like Colonel Fitzgerald doing such a strange thing?"

"Well, dat's more than anybody on this yeth can tell. On'ly I tell you dis *good*—whatever was de reason, it was a *right* reason, else Marse Gerald nebber done it. Ebberyfing as Marse Gerald does is right. Now I done gib you a conund'um to guess. I'll bid you good-night," said Jess, moving off to her attic.

Gertrude went thoughtfully up to her room and retired to bed. Next morning at the appointed hour Dr. Goodwin arrived in the gig, and Gertrude prepared to bid a sorrowful adieu to her friends and beloved home, and set out with him for her residence at Greenwood.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GREENLEAFS OF GREENWOOD.

IT has been said it would have taken the learning, genius, and industry of a London lawyer, a French detective, and a Scotch antiquary to trace out the origin, pedigree, and relationship of the old Greenleafs, Rowleys, Slaughters, and Fitzgeralds. These were four families who owned the whole of Wilde county, with the exception of Haddon's Ferry and the public ground on which the court-house, the jail, and the alms-house, were built at the county-seat at Wildeville. To keep the land among themselves, so frequent had been marriages, intermarriages, and re-marriages among them that no herald could have told how much kin who was to whom. But enough of all this.

Once upon a time there flourished in Wilde county, a Mr. Gerard Greenleaf, of Greenwood, who married almost as many wives as King Henry the VIII. All his sons, except the youngest, had been killed in the Revolutionary War. All his daughters, except the youngest, had married dutifully amongst their relatives, the Rowleys, Fitzgeralds, and Slaughters. The exceptional boy and girl were the two children of his last marriage, and

were born after their father had attained sixty years. At the commencement of our story, the son, Royal Greenleaf was a bachelor of forty years of age and master of Greenwood. The daughter was a stately maiden lady of thirty-seven, and mistress of her bachelor brother's house. No greater contrast in personal appearance, mind and manners, was ever seen than that existing between this brother and sister. Mr. Royal Greenleaf was a tall, florid-faced, red-headed and red-bearded giant, with blue eyes, smiling lips, a ringing laugh, and a frank, ready cordiality when he was pleased and in a good humour; but a man of violent temper, of reckless word and act, when offended.

Multitudes of frequent spongers filled his house, and he had some dependents who had a claim upon him. First among these was his younger sister, Miss Susan Greenleaf, the stately maiden lady, mentioned as such a contrast to her brother.

She was thirty-seven, but did not look over twenty-five. She was tall and slender, with a well set head, covered with bright chestnut hair. She had an oval face, regular features, a pale complexion, and blue eyes, with a demure reserved expression. She dressed plainly in dark colours, and she carried herself erect in walking.

Miss Susan was a reader of romances, and her character was modified and her conduct modelled by the character and conduct of her favourite heroines. She had had many suitors, but had never married. Her most admired novel was "The Children of the Abbey!" her pattern of female excellence was Amanda Fitzallan; her model of all manly perfection was Lord Mortimore.

But notwithstanding the romantic character of her mind, Miss Susan Greenleaf excelled in good sense. She kept her bachelor brother's house in such order that she was always cited as the model manager of the neighbourhood.

Besides Miss Susan, who had a natural right to her place at the head of her bachelor brother's establishment, there was another sister, Dorothea Greenleaf, who, by an imprudent marriage, would seem to have lost her claim to her brother's protection. Royal Greenleaf did not think so, for he gave a warm welcome to this poor sister and her daughter. Dorothy's sad story was this:

Among the Fitzgeralds there was one young scamp, who, to borrow Royal Greenleaf's own words—"would neither Gee, Whoa, nor Come hither,"—that is to say he, little Patrick Fitzgerald, could be neither coaxed, argued, nor driven into any measure that was against his own will.

He was not the heir of Forest Lodge, his family's estate, nor, as there were four brothers older than himself, was it likely he ever would be. His eldest brother would inherit the estate; his second brother was to take holy orders, his third was to be a medical practitioner, and his fourth a lawyer; but as for Master Patrick, he would not *hear* of either learned professions for himself. "Law, medicine, and divinity required too much study and application," he said. Neither would he go to the Military Academy at West Point, nor to the Naval School at Annapolis. "Both were too confining, and the discipline was too strict," he objected.

When he was fifteen years of age, he shipped himself as cabin-boy, on board the *Fanny Ann*, clipper, bound from Baltimore to Liverpool. And no more was heard of him in his native country for twenty years. Fortunately, he had no mother to break her heart over the unknown destiny of her truant boy. His father, Mr. Brutus Fitzgerald, and his aunt, Miss Maxima Rowley, were both practical people, with no "sentimental nonsense" about them. The only persons from whom Patrick grieved to part, and who mourned his absence, were his cousins, the children of Mr. Gerard Greenleaf of Greenwood, Doy, Sue, and Roy. Doy grieved without measure, and refused to be comforted by the remembrance that Patrick had often, in talking about going to sea, promised to bring her a monkey and a parrot, an ivory fan and an India shawl, when he should return, and to marry her as soon as he should make his fortune; but though she believed in his sincerity, she could not console herself with promises so unlikely to be fulfilled.

Patrick Fitzgerald was not heard of in his native country for twenty years. Doy, the eldest of the three Greenleaf children, grew up to be a beautiful young woman, with a finely proportioned form, a stately head with a wealth of bright brown chestnut hair, that

reached almost to her feet; and with finely-chiselled features and blooming complexion and dark, azure-blue eyes. Doy and Sue were both fair and stately women, but Doy was the tallest, the fairest, and the handsomest. Doy was the belle of the county. She had more offers of marriage than her younger sister; but she refused them all, not because none of them came up to some romantic ideal, but because she continued faithful to the memory of her childhood's friend, the wayward sailor boy.

Meanwhile Patrick Fitzgerald, after twenty years of toil in the merchant service, from that of cabin-boy to first mate, found himself in command of the East-Indiaman, *Grand Seigneur*, trading between New York and Calcutta, and with a snug capital invested in India goods. He had travelled all over the world, and now, after twenty years of adventurous life, he had probably forgotten all about his childhood's friends.

What impulse was it that led him to return to the home of his youth? He could never explain.

But one fine autumn, having returned safely into the port of New York, and finding himself with a winter of leisure before him, he though that he would like to go back to Virginia, see the old homestead, and find out who was dead, who was married, and what other changes had taken place in that neighbourhood.

Then a pang of remorse smote him—not for the first time—as he asked himself the question of Joseph in Egypt: "Doth my father still live?"

He could not tell; he had not heard from home since that night, when he had been kicked out of his father's house, and had run away to sea. True, his father had been hard, unsympathizing, and despotic; but he was his father still, and if Patrick wished to behold him again in this life, he must take the opportunity of this winter and go to see him, for old Brutus Fitzgerald, if living, was over seventy years of age. He packed a trunk with India silks, shawls, fans, jewels, pipes, spices, etc., as peace offerings to his estranged kindred, and started for his long-abandoned home. He had left it when a rosy-cheeked, dark-eyed, black, curly-haired lad of fifteen. He returned to it a bronzed man of thirty-five. It was at the close of a wintry day that he

reached home. No one knew him, not even the oldest servant. When he asked of the aged negro who admitted him the question that had grown a more anxious one with every mile of his homeward journey, and received the answer of the negro that "Marse Fitzgerald" was alive and well, he nearly dropped from the relaxation of his strained nerves.

He did not give his name, but he asked to be shown into his father's presence, and was ushered without ceremony into the well-known "study" at the back of the entrance-hall, where he found his father sitting at his desk alone, engaged with some accounts. He was surprised to find him looking so vigorous. The old gentleman arose politely, as if to receive a strange visitor. Patrick Fitzgerald then made himself known. The brave sailor spoke in faltering tones and with emotion. The father did not "fall upon his neck" and weep over him or rejoice over him. He looked at him and said:

"So you've come back. Well, I never should have known you. You've changed a great deal. I never should have known you. Sit down."

And with that the old gentleman shook his son's hand, and sank into his own seat and pushed a chair toward him.

Patrick sat down, feeling disappointed, yet what could he expect? His reception had not been a cordial one—for his appearance was unexpected; the feelings of age are slow; and his old father had scarcely time as yet to realize that the bronzed sailor before him was the same son who, as a slender lad, had ran away to sea twenty years before.

As, however, the fact grew upon him, and recognition brightened into certainty, his manner became warmer and kinder, and he asked many questions concerning his son's career during the long years of his absence, which Captain Fitzgerald answered by giving a brief account of his adventurous life.

His reception from his maiden aunt, Miss Maxima Rowley, was extremely stiff and cold. She seemed really more offended with him for coming back than she had been for his running away. But she was, at last, quite

mollified by the gift of an India silk dress, a real cashmere shawl, a set of Oriental pearls, and a Chinese ivory fan.

When his arrival became generally known, it created a great sensation in the neighbourhood, among all the "kith, kin, and generations" of the Rowleys, Slaughters, Greenleafs, and Fitzgeralds. They called upon him, they welcomed him home, they received his visits, and they accepted his rich presents; but when it became known that he was a bachelor and suspected that he was in search of a wife among his own kindred in Wilde County, they all immediately stood upon their guard; for he could not be allowed to seek one in the exclusive circle of their "first families." No mere merchant captain, however well-born, honourable and prosperous, even though his name was Fitzgerald, must ever hope to wed with another Fitzgerald, or with a Slaughter, a Greenleaf, or a Rowley!

But the very warmest welcome home that the returning exile received was from his cousins and playmates, Roy, Doy and Sue Greenleaf. Roy had now matured into the fine, jolly man, and Doy and Sue into the fair women I have described them to be.

Their aged father and invalid mother, who were both confined to their rooms by years or infirmities, also sent for Patrick and welcomed him affectionately.

And when the Christmas holidays came, which are always the very gayest and most festive days in the year among the planters of Virginia, there was a round of parties, with perpetual fiddling and dancing from one house to another, and no more welcome guest than the handsome sailor was received at any of them.

Still the old folks kept their eyes upon the young ones; for the gay captain was not to be allowed to go too far in his acquaintance with the marriageable young ladies of the neighbourhood.

If Patrick Fitzgerald had, in his twenty years of seafaring life, forgotten his childish sweetheart, it did not take him very long now to fall desperately in love with his beautiful and dignified cousin.

He proposed to her on the first opportunity, and she who had never ceased to love him from infancy up,

frankly accepted him on condition that her parents should consent to the marriage.

The suitor then referred the matter to her father, old Mr. Gerard Greenleaf, who flatly refused to give his daughter to a sea-captain.

Patrick then returned to the lady of his love with this discouraging answer, reminding her, however, that she was then twenty-seven years of age and her own mistress, free to marry whom she would, and imploring her to marry him at once.

But she replied that she would never marry without her father's consent, during her father's life-time; but that she would be as faithful to her life-long love in the future as she had been in the past, and would wait for her betrothed any number of years until time and fate should make her free to marry him.

Pat lugubriously reminded her, now, that she was twenty-seven, he thirty-five, and that they had not "any number" of years to live; and again urged her, then and there to become his wife and take the chance of reconciling her father to their marriage after it had become an accomplished fact.

She remained, however, sadly firm in her resolution not to rebel against the will of her parents; but reiterated her assurance that she would be faithful to him unto death.

He received her promise as an earnest of their final union, in a very few years, for her father was now over eighty years of age, and could not be expected to live very long, while her mother, much younger, was a meek and tender-hearted little woman, who could never be so unkind as to oppose any measure essential to her daughter's happiness.

And now an event occurred that, for the time being, turned the thoughts of Patrick Fitzgerald even from the troubled "course of true love." This was the sudden death of his father, from an acute attack of gout.

The funeral, the reading of the will, and the settlement of the estate, occupied the captain and his brothers for many days. The estate was left to the eldest brother, Gamaliel Fitzgerald, who, having married an heiress and settled upon her estate, chose to leave his own patrimony under the charge of an overseer.

This arrangement practically turned Miss Maxima Rowley, the maiden aunt, and Captain Fitzgerald, the youngest brother, out of doors.

Miss Maxima found a home with *her* uncle, the veteran General Slaughter, with whom she remained to the end of his life.

Patrick Fitzgerald engaged lodgings in Wildeville until April, when the handsome captain took a fond leave of his faithful lady-love, and journeyed to New York, where he resumed command of his ship, and went to sea to make more money, while the beautiful Doy remained at Greenwood and frequented the county-balls to break more hearts.

Captain Fitzgerald sailed direct for the East Indies, stopping only at the Cape of Good Hope, where he mailed a voluminous letter to his betrothed, which she received in due time—that is, within six months after it was posted, and twelve months after her lover had left her.

The Captain continued his voyage to Calcutta. He had no means of hearing from his lady-love until his homeward-bound voyage, when, on calling at the Cape of Good Hope, he received an answer to his letter, directed as he had instructed her, to the care of the American Consul at Cape Town.

This letter was sealed with black wax, a circumstance which would have alarmed him very much had he not recognized in the superscription the handwriting of Miss Doy, and so received assurance of her continued life and health.

Whoever might be gone from Greenwood, Doy was there and well. That was the greatest comfort in the world.

He broke the seal calmly, and read her letter.

In it she informed him of the death of both her parents, who had passed away some months previous to the date of her letter. Her mother, who had long been an invalid, was the first to go, from the effects of a severe pneumonia, contracted in the first spell of cold weather in the winter after the departure of Captain Fitzgerald. Her very aged father, stricken down by the shock, never rallied, but took to his bed and followed his beloved wife within the

week. Both bodies were interred at the same time in the same grave.

I cannot say that the captain, kind-hearted as he really was, felt himself completely overwhelmed by this news. He was very sorry for the gentle lady who had passed away in mid-life, and still more sorry for the bereaved daughter, made fatherless and motherless in a single week; but as for the old man of nearly ninety years, who had lived so long beyond the natural term of human life and had opposed so strongly his marriage with his love, Patrick Fitzgerald could only think of him as of an obstacle removed from his path of freedom and happiness.

He could now marry Doy Greenleaf! He would have hastened home if he could have done so; but his castle of a ship was at the mercy of the winds and waves, and had to abide their will.

He did, however, curtail his sojourn in Cape Town harbour, and set sail on the earliest possible day for New York.

The homeward journey was a comparatively quick and prosperous one. He anchored safely in the port of New York, whence he wrote to Miss Greenleaf to announce his arrival.

Then, as soon as he could complete his business with his employers, and turn over his ship, he hurried home to his native county, and took lodgings in the little hotel at Wildeville.

There he hired a horse and rode joyfully over to Greenwood to see his betrothed.

It was now four years since his first return, and three years and a half since his last departure. He was forty years old, and his fair betrothed was thirty. They had really no time to lose, and he must marry her *now* or never.

Again it was at the close of an early winter day that he rode up the lane leading to Greenwood.

He found jolly Royal Greenleaf reigning at Greenwood, and his two fair and stately sisters—Doy, the beautiful, and Sue, the sentimental—keeping house for him. It was more than two years since their parents had passed away, and they had quite recovered their cheerfulness, and left off their mourning.

CHAPTER XXII.

PATRICIA FITZGERALD.

THE meeting was a very joyful one, not only between the betrothed pair, Patrick and Doy, but between the fast friends, Patrick, Royal and Sue. The last mentioned two were scarcely less glad to welcome their friend than was Doy to welcome her lover.

Nothing would do but that Captain Fitzgerald must send back his horse to Wildeville, hang up his hat at Greenwood, and make the home of the Greenleafs *his* home until he should go to sea again.

Royal would not even allow him to go back to Wildeville that night to look after his luggage. No; he would not even trust him out of his sight, for fear he should not see him again for another four years, or perhaps not even for another twenty-four. He sent a servant with a waggon and an order to Wildeville to fetch back the captain's baggage, so that by the next day Captain Fitzgerald was comfortably domiciled at Greenwood.

This arrangement was highly satisfactory to all concerned—to the lovers who, after their long separation, liked to be together always; to Miss Sue, who delighted in the sailor's long yarns—tales of adventure by land and sea, told by their winter fireside; and lastly, to Royal Greenleaf, who found in his boyhood's friend a jovial companion in all his sports, and—a fourth hand and keen antagonist at whist. Captain Fitzgerald was, therefore, not only made to feel that he was not only welcome but needful to the little family circle at Greenwood.

Thus the lovers were made very happy. Their course of true love, now having passed all the breakers, ran very smoothly on. But they really had no time to lose in dalliance; at least the captain had not, and *he* meant business. This was December, and he was bound by a

contract to take command of the East Indiaman *Grand Seigneur*, on the first of the ensuing April, and sail with a heavy cargo from New York to Calcutta.

Besides, the lovers were no longer young. The handsome and gallant captain was really forty years old and looked every day of it. The beautiful and majestic Doy was really thirty years of age, though she did not seem to be over twenty.

Both were certainly of discreet age and free to contract marriage. Yet as a matter of etiquette, Patrick Fitzgerald formally solicited of Royal Greenleaf, the hand of his sister Dorothy; and when he had gained a prompt and cordial assent, he also expressed a hope that Mr. Greenleaf would have no objection to the celebration of the marriage at a very early day.

The very idea of jovial Royal Greenleaf objecting to an early wedding! Why, he was a great deal more eager, impatient and delighted at the prospect of such a jollification than either the bridegroom or the bride. He not only gave a prompt and cordial consent, but he demanded that the wedding-day should be instantly set, and preparations for the festival commenced; and he forthwith upset the self-possession of the dignified Doy by sending a peremptory message, calling her to a consultation on these affairs. But she came, and the day was fixed, and the preparations were commenced.

In those days, in that neighbourhood, wedding cards were not printed or engraved; they were written generally by the master's secretary, the mistress's companion, the boys' tutor, the girls' governess, or, failing all these, by the ladies of the family. Doy and Sue, therefore, went to work writing cards of invitation to all the kith, kin and following of the Rowleys, Fitzgeralds, Slaughters and Greenleafs.

And Royal Greenleaf went out and gave orders to his overseer for the slaughter of a hecatomb of pigs, sheep, turkeys, geese and ducks, to be hung up to freeze, that their flesh might be in a good condition for the marriage feast. And he sent a reliable servant down to Richmond to purchase foreign wines, nuts, fruits, and other delicacies that could not be procured in the country stores.

To be sure, he said, his brother-in-law was only a captain in the merchant service, but unquestionably he was

a true gentleman both by birth and education, if not by condition and occupation; while his own sister, Doy, was in every possible sense of the word, a real lady, and so she should have a wedding as grand as any that had ever been given to either of his other sisters who had married royally into their own family circle!

His only regret, frequently uttered, was this: that his own especial vessel, the *Lovely Doy*, named after his favourite sister, and bound from Alexandria to Liverpool, with a cargo of tobacco and an order for foreign goods, had already sailed, so that he could not send by her for a splendid wedding outfit for the bride elect.

However, all other things being in readiness, the wedding of Captain Fitzgerald and Miss Greenleaf took place on the evening of the tenth of December, in the drawing-room at Greenwood, in the presence of a large assembly of friends, relatives and neighbours. Dr. Goodwin, of the Old Red Sandstone Church, performed the ceremony, and Royal Greenleaf gave away the bride. Sue Greenleaf served as first bride-maid, and other young ladies and young gentlemen of the neighbourhood as bride-maids and grooms-men.

After the ceremony there followed the cutting of the wedding-cake, and after that fiddling and dancing, kept up till a late hour, when the wedding festivities for that night were concluded with a sumptuous supper.

It seems needless to say that jolly Royal Greenleaf figured largely in the frolic, danced in every set, kissed the pretty bride-maids, jested at the expense of the bridal pair, set the table in a roar at the supper, and, in short, conducted himself in a very eccentric, if not insane manner.

After the wedding feast, the bride and groom did not run away on a wedding tour to the antipodes; such was not the fashion at that day. They remained at Greenwood, as their headquarters, and spent their honeymoon in a round of parties given them by their friends, neighbours, and relatives. The first ball was on the evening after the wedding, at the "Summit," the seat of the bridegroom's relative, Mr. Maurice Fitzgerald; the second party was at the Caves, the seat of the bridegroom's cousin, Mr. Patrick Rowley; the third at the "Ravine," the home of Leven Greenleaf; the fourth

at the "Wilderness," the place of Samuel Slaughter. In brief, parties were given the newly-married pair at the houses of all the family relatives with the exception of Hill Top Hall, where the haughty General Slaughter, and his niece, Miss Maxima Rowley, held themselves aloof from "the sailor's wedding."

In this manner the wedding festivities were kept up for a month or more; and then Captain and Mrs. Fitzgerald settled down at Greenwood for a few weeks of quiet happiness, previous to their parting when the term of Captain Fitzgerald's leisure should expire.

When, however, the time for his departure drew near, so great was the grief of his Doy that he could not bear to see it. He wrote and requested to be released from his contract with the merchants in whose service he had engaged to sail for the East Indies, on the first of April. They refused to release him on any terms. He was a highly-esteemed captain in their service, and they felt that they could not dispense with him.

Patrick Fitzgerald's blood was up. He swore that he was not their slave, and that he would see the whole merchant service swamped before he would grieve his Doy, in this, the first year of her marriage. So he wrote and broke the contract, and paid the forfeit, before saying to her anything about it.

When, however, she heard what had taken place, she grieved over her own weakness which had cost such loss, both of money and credit, to her gallant husband. She said little about the subject, for she was no great talker; but she formed a private resolution, never to let her own emotions overcome her again to the detriment of his interests.

Captain Fitzgerald remained at Greenwood idle, and, notwithstanding his devoted love for his wife, fretting impatiently at his idleness some months longer.

Meanwhile poor Doy took the lesson to heart. So that when, in October, he received a proposal to take command of the splendid new ship *Grand Vizier*, then being fitted out in the Baltimore harbour for the East India service, Doy herself urged him to accept it. He appreciated her self-denial. He kissed her, and thanked her for her counsel, which, in truth, was only her consent, and he promised her that this should be absolutely

his very last voyage — that after this, he added, he should have made money enough to buy a place and settle down in his own native county, where he meant to turn practical farmer and live at home with Doy. So he wrote and accepted the offer of the Baltimore Company, and commenced preparations for the voyage.

When all was ready for his departure he nerved himself to take leave of his patient wife, congratulating himself and her that he was leaving her in the congenial home of her childhood, in the company of her gay, good-hearted brother and her tender, loving sister.

"You will be gone three years!" she murmured.

"Yes, love," he answered, with a sigh like the blow of a porpoise.

"Of course, I knew you would, but I have something to tell you, Fitz. I would have told you before, dear, only I was not quite certain"—here she dropped her eyes beneath his loving, wondering gaze, and hid her face upon his breast, and whispered: "I think, dear—I am almost sure that, when you come back, you will find a little boy between two and three years old, and his name will be Patrick Fitzgerald."

The sailor never moved nor spoke, but stood spell-bound with a sort of loving awe, holding her to his bosom until she whispered:

"Are you glad, Fitz?"

"Glad! Oh, but are you sure?"

"Almost—quite sure."

"God bless and save you, my dearest! but this makes it so much harder to leave you. Yes, I am glad and sorry!" he answered, with much emotion.

"But it makes it easier for me to let you go. I shall have something to take care of for you until you come."

At length, the bitter parting moment came. He strained her to his bosom in a long embrace, then placed her in her brother's arms, and broke away. But, before he had gone many steps, she stretched her hands out to him, and cried to him imploringly.

He rushed back, exclaiming:

"What is it, my dearest one?"

"Let me gaze on your eyes once more."

He laughed gayly, as if to keep up her courage and his

own, as he took both her hands in his, and opened his honest eyes as wide as he could.

She gazed into them as if she would have poured her soul into that gaze.

"Why, what is the matter, Doy, dear?" he inquired.

"I do not know. I wanted to look into your eyes again. There, that will do, dear. Good-by. God bless you!" she murmured.

He pressed her to his heart again, uttered a fervent prayer for her safety, then hastily released her, and hurried to the carriage that was waiting to convey him to Wildeville to meet the stage in which he was to commence his journey.

Royal Greenleaf bore his half-fainting sister into the house, where the tender-hearted Sue cared for her. This short year of married love had been the happiest of Doy Fitzgerald's life. Now, all was over, and over forever, although she did not know it then.

She received one letter from her absent husband, dated from Baltimore on the eve of his sailing for Calcutta. In this letter he assured her of his undying love, and of his firm resolution that this should be his very last voyage; for that after this should be over, he would not leave his Doy again.

Ah! it was indeed his last voyage, unwittingly predicted in his last letter.

She never saw or heard of her handsome sailor husband again.

At first she was not anxious about him; deeply grieved at his absence she certainly was, but not alarmed for his safety. She knew that in any case she could not get a letter from him for months to come, unless he should happen to speak a homeward-bound ship and write by her—which was not likely to happen. So she forced herself to wait patiently and hopefully for a letter from Cape Town, where his ship would stop on her voyage.

Besides, she had something else to think of—the pleasing surmises of the young wife, time proved, to be well founded, and she was destined to be a mother.

In those days there were no bazaars where an infant's complete outfit could be purchased much cheaper than it could be prepared. In those days every young mother, however wealthy, made up her own infant's clothes.

Doy set to work on the most pleasing task that can employ a woman's hands; Sue helped her, and became as deeply interested as the expectant mother, and in making a miniature wardrobe for the little traveller, the time slipped pleasantly away, and they forgot to be anxious about their great voyager.

"To think, Sue, only to think, when his father comes home he will be nearly three years old—at least he will be over two," said Doy, speaking of the expected little stranger, one evening as they sat sewing together.

"You always speak of the child as a boy. How do you know it will not turn out to be a girl?" smiled Miss Sue.

"That would be *too* disappointing. No; he will be a boy! a fine boy, and I shall name him Patrick, after his father, and he will be almost old enough to wear boy's clothes when his father comes home! And oh! by the way! I expect little Patrick about the middle of March. Now suppose he should arrive on St. Patrick's day, the seventeenth day of March, wouldn't that be a strange coincidence?"

"It would be indeed, unless the child should turn out to be a girl."

"Now, don't be so discouraging, Sue Greenleaf. He will be a boy—of course he will be a boy. The idea of my having a girl!" exclaimed Doy, drawing herself up.

She said no more, but began to quill the border of an embroidered cap for the "boy."

The Christmas holidays were near at hand, when a strange thing happened to the young wife.

It was late at night, and Doy was seated alone in the family sitting-room, for Sue was shut up in her own chamber, reading a new novel, "The Orphan of the Castle," and Royal had not yet returned from Wildeville, where—more's the pity—he was probably losing money at the card-table.

It was a cold night, and Doy was sitting before the ruddy wood fire, with her feet on the fender. She was engaged in knitting a pair of blue lambs'-wool shoes for the coming boy; and as knitting is a very ruminating sort of work, she was dreaming more of her absent sailor than she had ever done since the first month of his absence. But she was not asleep. Doy always declared

herself ready to say upon oath that she never was more wide-awake than when she heard a voice speak distinctly in her ear and say :

"*Captain Fitzgerald is no more*," and, at the same time, a vision passed before her eyes, and disappeared so swiftly that she could not recognize the form any more than that it seemed to be human.

For a moment, Doy sat transfixed with supernatural awe, and then she started up, shaking with terror, and fled up stairs to her sister's room and, with pallid face and trembling voice, told Sue what she had seen and heard.

"You have been dreaming," said Miss Greenleaf. "Sit down and compose yourself."

Doy sank half-fainting into a chair, and protested that she had never been more wide awake in her life.

Sue shook her head.

"Let us put down the hour, the day, and the month, with the exact words," said Doy.

"If you wish it; but it is all nonsense," replied Sue, producing a pencil and paper from her bureau-drawer.

"Listen—Eleven o'clock at night, on the thirteenth of December, 'Captain Fitzgerald is no more,' spoken distinctly in my ear while a vision passed before my eyes as I sat alone and wide awake. Put that down."

Miss Sue "put that down," and folded up the paper, and placed it in her bureau-drawer, and then set herself to comfort her trembling and distressed sister, by telling her how many dreams, visions, presentiments, etc., she herself had know of, which had never come to anything. At last, she gave Doy a sedative cordial, and made her go to bed.

A good night's rest so restored the spirits of Doy, that she was half-persuaded to believe that her supernatural experience of the night before *had* been a dream, and the arrival of the Christmas holidays, with all their gaieties, put the last shadows of superstitious fear to flight.

Time passed and brought the month of March, but no news, good or bad, came from Captain Fitzgerald or the *Grand Vizier*.

"No news is good news," said Miss Sue, "especially

in this case. For if anything had happened to the ship, we should probably have heard of it by this time."

So thought the hopeful Doy, who was now daily expecting the arrival of her "boy."

The middle of March came; the seventeenth, St. Patrick's day, came, and with it arrived Doy's baby—a fine little blue-eyed girl. Doy was dreadfully disappointed; but Sue was delighted and "took" to the baby before it was a week old.

"And to think *it*," (Doy would not say "she,") "to think *it* was born on St. Patrick's day, and should turn out to be a girl! It would have been so nice for it to have been a boy, and then I could have called him Patrick, both after the saint and after his father."

"You can call her after the saint and after her father too," said Sue, soothingly.

"The idea of calling a girl Patrick!" exclaimed Doy.

"Not Patrick, but a beautiful name which will be the same in substance and meaning. You know St. Patrick was not an Irishman, though he was the patron saint of Ireland. He was a noble Roman named Patricius, who was converted to Christianity and went as a missionary to Ireland where his name became shortened into Patrick. Call your girl Patricia, which is the feminine of Patricius, and then she will be named both for the saint and for her father," Miss Sue explained.

"Patricia! Oh, what a lovely name! and so odd! Yes, I will call my little girl Patricia, and you and Roy shall stand godmother and godfather for her, when she is christened!" exclaimed Doy, almost half consoled by the beautiful name.

In due time Doy left her chamber, and the first Sunday thereafter Patricia was christened in the little Catholic Chapel of St. Patrick's at Wildeville. Royal Greenleaf stood godfather and Doy herself and Sue Greenleaf stood godmother to the little newly-made Christian.

"It is an elegant name, a noble name. I like it perfectly," said Doy, with much satisfaction.

But alack! Royal Greenleaf spoiled it all when, much to the disgust of his sisters, he began to curtail the aristocratic name Patricia, into plain, vulgar "Pat," and to call his lovely little infant niece "Pat" or "Pat Fitz,"

But news soon came which put all trifles out of the head of all concerned.

The East Indiaman *Grand Vizier* had foundered in a gale in mid ocean, on the night of the thirteenth of December, and only half-a-dozen sailors, picked up on a raft by an outward bound merchant ship, had lived to tell the tale.

Doy was stricken nearly unto death by this heavy blow. And although her devoted brother and sister did all they could to console her, it was months before she was able to rally. Then she fixed all her affections upon her fatherless child, whom she now worshipped with an almost fanatical devotion.

Since the loss of her gallant husband, Doy Fitzgerald and her orphan daughter had found a loved and loving home with her devoted brother and sister.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GERTRUDE AT GREENWOOD.

"I AM glad to see you looking so well this morning, my love," said the venerable Dr. Goodwin, as he handed Gertrude into the carriage that was to convey her to Greenwood on that bright and beautiful midsummer morning.

"Thanks, dear Dr. Goodwin. Yes, I am wonderfully well. This morning, when I first came out into the sunshine, however, just as all the beauty and glory of the Lord's earth was flowing into my soul, a pang suddenly smote me with the thought that my dear grandfather was not here to enjoy it with me as of old; that he was deep buried in the dark grave; and the sphere of death enveloped me and shadowed all my soul just so suddenly as you have seen a black cloud pass over the sun's disc and darken all the earth; but just as suddenly came the reaction; before my oppressed spirit had time to moan, the cloud passed from before the

sun, the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and my beloved and venerated guide stood revealed—not in his visible form, not to the eyes of flesh, but in his beautiful, ascended shape, and to the vivid insight of love—nearer, dearer, more intimate than ever. Mr. Goodwin, I thank the Lord and I am happy."

The old minister lifted his hat and gravely bent his gray head, but said nothing.

The carriage, leaving Haddon's Ferry, turned into the river-road leading down toward the Old Red Sandstone Church. It was a rough and narrow road, with the gloomy precipices of Wolfe's Ridge on the right, and the rapids of Wilde River on the left. But the splendour of the midsummer morning sun lighted up all the scene with life and joy; the perfume of innumerable wild flowers filled the air with fragrance; and songs of myriad birds celebrated the jubilee of nature's awakening.

Five miles below Haddon's they passed under the venerable towers of the Summit Manor House, built high on the ridge above them.

"This day, one week ago, there were grand preparations going on in that house, my dear," said the old minister, driving slowly as he gazed up at the magnificent old structure.

"Yes, I heard a great deal of talk about it," answered Gertrude.

"It seems a pity it should have been postponed. It was a marriage made in heaven, if ever a marriage was made there. It was a marriage of love as well as of worldly wisdom, a union of hearts as well as of hands. It was also to have united in one young pair all the great Fitzgerald estates in Wilde county. I had intended to be present at the marriage; but, at last! instead of assisting at a wedding, I was called to officiate at a funeral," said the old minister, with a sigh, as he touched his old horse and drove past the Summit.

"Will the wedding be deferred for any great length of time?" inquired Gertrude with sympathic interest.

"I do not know, my dear. I have not heard. But I fear that the death of General Slaughter was not the only cause of the postponement of the wedding. I fear that there has been some serious misunderstanding between the fiery tempered young couple. Fiery temper is

the only fault of the Fitzgeralds. But what can we expect? It is an Irish-Italian race, with the grand virtues and vices of both peoples. It is said that Miss Fitzgerald has left the Summit Manor House, and that Colonel Fitzgerald still lingers in Washington City."

"Colonel Fitzgerald arrived last night. I myself brought him across the river. He went on to the Summit Manor House, as soon as the storm was over," said Gertrude, quietly.

The old doctor slackened his horse's pace, and turned and looked at his young companion for a moment, and then said:

"Gerald Fitzgerald returned last night! What does it all mean? Well, I hope now that all will be as it should between the young pair," he added, meditatively, as he touched up his horse and drove on in perfect silence.

A mile farther down the river they passed under the time-honoured walls of the old Red Sandstone Church, and then they turned out of the river road and struck into another on the right, leading away from the shore into a wooded pass between two precipices.

"This is the private road into Greenwood. You never came along this road before, did you, my dear?" inquired the minister.

"No, Dr. Goodwin. I never was farther this way than the church. It is a beautiful road. It reminds me of the Midsummer Night's Dream. In these deep green leafy ravines and caverns, one might almost expect to see Oberon and Titania holding their fairy court," murmured Gertrude, dreamily.

A mile or two of slow driving, through the wildly-beautiful wooded pass, brought them out upon a green glade walled in by the green forest.

In the midst of this glade stood the farm-house and buildings, known as Greenwood.

The dwelling house was a large irregular edifice, of great age, built like most of the homes in this locality, of old red sandstone, and having a very steep roof with many gable-ends, stacks of chimneys, queer little balconies and verandas, and odd little corner stoops and porches, all so covered with ivy, creeping vines, and climbing roses that its original design could by no

means be defined. This quaintly picturesque and attractive dwelling stood in the midst of a green lawn, heavily shaded with great forest-trees. Behind the house were kitchen and flower-gardens, shrubberies, orchards, and vineyards. Beyond and all around were rich fields of grain, tobacco, and cotton, (for though cotton was by no means a staple article of produce, enough was cultivated on every plantation to supply material for the negroes' clothing, which was always at this time manufactured at home.) A winding, shaded, grass-grown drive led through the lawn, and up to the house.

"It is a lovely place! It is so green and beautiful! Like a nest in the wild wood, indeed!" said Gertrude, in warm admiration, as the doctor's carriage drew up before one of the quaint little stoops.

"You like your future home, then, my dear?" said Dr. Goodwin, in a tone of pleasure.

"Like it? Oh, unspeakably! But not as my future home. Oh! no. No place but dear old Haddon can ever be my future home!" answered Gertrude, with tender gravity.

"Ah, well, my dear child, time will show," smiled the minister, as he alighted from the carriage.

"Here, Hannibal, thou thunderbolt of war! come and take the horse's head," he cried, beckoning one of a group of negroes who were crossing the lawn.

The smallest, thinnest, blackest, and oldest specimen of a negro man that ever was seen, came skipping towards the carriage.

"Look at him, my dear. He is ninety-seven years old, and hasn't a tooth in his jaws, or a hair on his head, yet he has the agility of a monkey; but he is all nerve and muscle you see," said Dr. Goodwin, as he threw the reins to the aged groom, and assisted Gertrude to alight.

"Are the ladies at home this morning, Hannibal?" he next inquired.

"Miss Suey is at home, sar, but Missis Doy Fitzgerald and Miss Pat is gone out riding along of Miss Gerry, sar," replied Hannibal, jumping from side to side, and bowing by jerks.

"Why, is Miss Geraldine here?" asked the old minister, with interest.

"She am, sar," said the old groom, skipping about and bowing.

"Stop dancing, Hannibal, and attend to the horse. You will teach him bad tricks," laughed Dr. Goodwin, as he led Gertrude up some crooked stairs to a corner stoop in which there were two odd little green doors at right angles with each other. One opened into Royal Greenleaf's small study, where he was accustomed to keep his account-books and receive his overseer. The other opened into the entrance-hall, where many other doors led into other rooms and a winding staircase conducted to the floors above.

Dr. Goodwin rang the bell and was admitted by a neat, bright mulatto girl, who opened a door on the right and showed the visitor into a large, cool parlour, whose many windows—three on the south and three on the west—were so deeply shaded with green vines that the sunshine only entered between the leaves in flickering golden sparks. The parlour walls were bare of paper, but lime-washed, smooth and white as new-fallen snow; the floor was bare of carpet or matting, but was scrubbed and polished until it was clear and shining as ivory. The furniture was rich and heavy old mahogany, and the sofas and easy chairs were covered with old-fashioned chintz. The broad fireplace on the south side was filled with fragrant cedar boughs. Over the high, wrought oak mantelpiece hung a life-sized, half-portrait of a stout, broad-shouldered, black-eyed, black-bearded, piratical-looking scamp in the semi-naval uniform of a merchant captain. On each side of the fireplace were glass cases, filling up the whole recesses from floor to ceiling. The case on the right hand was filled with books, and the case on the left hand was filled with shells, minerals, stuffed birds, preserved insects and reptiles, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian toys, and other curiosities brought from foreign countries and presented to the sisters. Other family portraits hung around on the walls in the spaces between the windows and the doors.

"Sit down, my dear Gertrude," said the old man, politely placing a chair for his young companion, and seating himself by her side. "This is the two ladies' own parlour, sacred to the use of Mrs. Doy and Miss

Sue, and their friends. None of Royal Greenleaf's wild bachelor cronies ever intrude here. That picture over the mantelpiece is a portrait of Captain Patrick Fitzgerald, late of the merchant service, embalmed as a hero in the memory of his widow, Mrs. Doy, but considered little better than a buccaneer by other people. That glass cabinet on the left is filled with souvenirs of the captain's many voyages. That bookcase on the right, with its contents, is the property of Miss Sue Greenleaf. I ought to let you a little into the characteristics of these ladies, my dear, because you are to live with them intimately and long."

"Thanks, dear Dr. Goodwin. I would like to know something about them, that I may be better able to please them," said Gertrude, with humility.

"There is not a doubt that you will please them, my dear; and I hope and believe they will also please you. They are both very refined and intellectual, although they have not had all the advantages of education that might have been desirable for them. Mrs. Doy is devoted to the memory of her late husband, whom she worships as a sort of hero and martyr. He died at sea, within a few months after their marriage, and she has lived a widow ever since, notwithstanding that her position here is a dependent one, and that she has had several offers from wealthy and independent suitors."

"Ah, I shall love that lady! I know I shall love that lady! Such fidelity is so beautiful!" said Gertrude, warmly.

"I don't know, my dear, about such fidelity being so beautiful. I consider it rather morbid," said Dr. Goodwin, slowly shaking his head.

By the way, it was whispered, in Wilde county tea-parties, that the worthy doctor himself had been one of the suitors of the beautiful Doy, and that he had lived a widower so long, not from regard to the memory of the late Mrs. Goodwin, but in devotion to the charms of the implacable widow Fitzgerald.

"Is she cheerful, Dr. Goodwin?"

"As full of life as a bird, my dear! and as humane, sympathetic, and as much given to active charity as any woman I ever saw in all my life. Such is Mrs. Doy. The other sister, the maiden sister, Miss Sue Greenleaf, is

extremely poetical, sentimental, and romantic. She tries all real character by an ideal standard, and has never married, I verily believe, because she has never met any man worthy of being compared to her favourite heroes of romance. And yet in all other matters she is surprisingly practical and efficient, and as the mistress of her brother's bachelor establishment, she is a model housekeeper and exemplary hostess."

"I—think—I shall like her too," said Gertrude hesitatingly.

"Very likely, my dear, most young ladies do. I wonder why she keeps us waiting so long? Ah, dear me! Here comes Ben Bowers!" exclaimed the doctor, in a tone of such annoyance, as to elicit from Gertrude an interrogative echo of:

"Ben Bowers?"

"Yes, my dear, Ben Bowers, one of Royal Greenleaf's good-for-nothing hangers-on. Heaven forgive me for saying it, and for my want of charity! *Hush!*"

As Dr. Goodwin pronounced the last cautionary word, the subject of the conversation entered the room.

Mr. Benjamin Bowers was a fair specimen of a class of men to be found in every community, but most frequently perhaps in country neighbourhoods in the Southern States—a hanger-on, a parasite, a sponge; in modern language, a "dead beat," not from poverty or necessity, but from laziness and indifference. Very often it happens that such a one has property that he is too careless to look after, or a profession that he is too lazy to practice.

Such was Mr. Ben Bowers, a distant bachelor-cousin of Royal Greenleaf's. He had inherited a farm which was first mortgaged, and then sold. He had learned a profession that he lacked patience and industry to practice. And now he lived about among his friends, bestowing the greater portion of his time upon good-natured Royal Greenleaf and his affable sisters. In person Ben Bowers was short, fat, and round bodied, with a full, fair, rosy face, innocent of any beard, and with light-yellow, curly hair, and light-blue laughing eyes. In manner he was free-and-easy, self-satisfied, and unconsciously impudent. He had offered himself to every spinster and every widow in Wilde county;

not that he was prone to fall in love, but that he wanted to be taken care of. He had offered himself in turn to the beautiful Doy, and the sentimental Sue, and been gravely and politely rejected. He had offered himself to Miss Maxima Rowley, and had been ordered out of the house, and threatened with a ducking in the horse-pond. Lastly, he had offered himself to little fifteen-year-old Pat, and had his ears boxed for his presumption. And, in all human probability, he would offer himself to the queenly Geraldine, and the Madonna-like Gertrude before the expiration of his present visit.

This hero now came into the room, looking cool and comfortable in his spotless white linen suit and broad-brimmed straw hat. He lifted his hat in honour of the minister and the lady, as he said:

"Good-morning, reverend sir. I come to you with the apologies of Miss Greenleaf. She is engaged just now with that poor, unhappy creature, Magdala, from Rockalone, but she will be with you in five minutes."

"Mr. Bowers, this is Miss Gertrude Haddon, the granddaughter of the late Gabriel Haddon, of Haddon's Ferry," said Dr. Goodwin, presenting his ward.

"Oh!—ah!—yes! Humph! I see! Happy to make your acquaintance, Miss. Knew your grandfather slightly. A good man. One of the best of men; but weak, Miss—weak! No man's enemy, Miss, not even 'his own,' as the saying is. Never heard him speak ill of a human being in my life. Do believe he would speak charitably even of the devil. Yes, Miss, if Satan had ever assailed him with a strong temptation to murder his bitterest enemy, old Hiram Slaughter, Gabriel Haddon would never have said, 'Get thee behind me,' but would have reasoned with him in something like this style: 'Satan, my distinguished friend, I have no doubt but you mean me well by your counsels; but I think you are mistaken. Murder is disorderly. I think if you will reflect you will see this thing in the same light that I do. Yes, my dear Miss, that would have been the way in which Gabriel Haddon would have met a temptation of the devil. He would not have been contented with resisting Satan, he would have tried to reform him!"

"My grandfather was a saint on earth, and he is an arch-angel in heaven," said Gertrude, with earnestness."

"Doubtless," said Ben Bowers, quickly taking the cue from the little heiress of Haddon's Ferry, and hastening to ingratiate himself with her. "Doubtless. He was only too good. I had the greatest respect for him, Miss. And I am exceedingly proud to make the acquaintance of his granddaughter."

Gertrude bowed gravely in acknowledgment of this courtesy.

"I am told that Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald is staying here," said Mr. Goodwin, by way of changing the conversation and relieving Gertrude.

"Yes, reverend sir, yes. You know, since Miss Maxima Rowley has taken up her abode at Hill Top Hall, as the representative and successor of her late uncle, General Hiram Slaughter, there is no lady at the head of the establishment at the Summit Manor House, and Miss Fitzgerald being left without a chaperone in a widower's home, deemed that it would not be proper for her to remain there, notwithstanding that the old gentleman is her guardian, and his only son is her betrothed. So she came to Greenwood a few days ago, and has been here ever since," Mr. Ben Bowers explained.

"Ah! so that was the reason why the young lady changed her residence," remarked Dr. Goodwin in a tone of relief.

"To be sure it was! There was an absurd rumour that a grave misunderstanding had arisen between Colonel Fitzgerald and his beautiful betrothed, but it was without the slightest foundation in truth."

"Gracious Heaven! whom have we here?" exclaimed Dr. Goodwin, recoiling as the door was suddenly thrown open, and a strange, wild-looking creature strode into the room, and stood gazing around.

It was a tall, gaunt, dark woman, apparently about forty years of age, clothed in a tattered crimson gown, with her wild, abundant black hair streaming like a meteor behind her, and her fierce black eyes flashing about from point to point, as if she were in search of some foe whom she could not find.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MAGDALA.

"IT is Magdala," said Ben Bowers, and he went gently toward the woman, and laying his hand upon her arm, said: "Come, my good girl, you must leave the room. Don't you see that we have company here?"

But with one sweep of her long arm she sent him reeling across the floor, as she exclaimed:

"Shoo! you great drone! Don't come buzzing around me. I have no hive to shelter you, no honey to feed you."

"Oh! Dr. Goodwin, who is she?" whispered Gertrude, half in terror, half in pity, as she shrunk nearer to her guardian.

"It is Magdala, a poor mad woman, who was rescued, years ago, from the inundation of the Wilde, some miles below Wildeville. She was a stranger in the neighbourhood, then, and she was conveyed to Rockalone, the seat of old Judge Sallust Rowley, the father of the present Mr. Sallust Rowley. She has remained there ever since—that is to say, they give her a home there whenever she chooses to stay at home; but she is very much addicted to wandering, and sometimes for weeks together she disappears and is not seen or heard of; for you see, my dear, she has been mad ever since that terrible night of her peril and rescue. So mad, that she has never been able to give any account of herself, and no one has ever been able to find out who she is; though for years, we continued, from time to time, to insert notices in the newspapers for her friends—if she had any—"

"Poor woman!—Dr. Goodwin?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Did grandfather ever tell you anything about me?"

"He told me all about you, my child."

"Then you know he found me among the white water-lilies, washed ashore in my cradle on the morning after the great flood."

"Yes, my dear, I know it."

"And no one knows any more of my history than they do of that poor woman there!"

"No, my dear, although for your friends, too, many advertisements were put in the papers, and continued for years after you were found."

"Could there have been any connection between me and that poor woman, Dr. Goodwin!"

"None whatever, my child. This woman was found full twenty miles from Haddon's Ferry, and on the other side of the river. Besides, to set all doubt about that at rest, she was brought to the ferry, and you were placed in the cradle in which you were found, and shown to her. She did not know you, and took not the slightest interest in you."

This conversation had been conducted in rapid whispers, which had not reached the ears of the strange woman, whose eyes were still roving wildly about the large and deeply shaded room. Suddenly those wild eyes fell upon the face of Gertrude, which was now turned toward her. And to the girl's extreme amazement, the woman now strode up to her, and fixing a steady gaze upon her face, seemed to read her very soul, as she said in slow and solemn tones:

"Gertrude Fitzgerald, you have received into your heart a deadly serpent. Cherish it there and it will sting you unto death. But tear it thence, though to do so may lacerate your bosom; strangle it, and cast it far from you, and you shall do well! Meanwhile, arise and fly from this fatal roof! Fly for your life while there is yet time! Woe! woe! woe! to you and others, if you disregard my warning! Lo! the destroyer is at hand! His foot is even now upon the threshold!"

And with these awful words upon her lips, the weird woman lifted up her hands high above her head, and strode from the room.

"Oh, Dr. Goodwin! Dr. Goodwin! what did she mean?" gasped Gertrude, shivering, as she clung to her guardian's arm.

"She does not know herself, my girl. She is as mad

as a March hare! She always is at the full of the moon. Come! cheer up!" said the minister, heartily.

"She called me Gertrude Fitzgerald. And you know we really have no clue to my true name. If she should have one now?" suggested the girl.

"Nonsense, my love. She meant Gertrude Haddon, poor addle-pate that she is! Come, think no more of her. Here is Miss Greenleaf."

As the minister spoke, a tall, stately, fair-complexioned and refined-looking lady, of about forty-two or three years of age, entered the parlour. Although it was still morning, she was dressed in a rich black silk, with fine lace ruffles at the throat and wrists, and her brown hair was carefully arranged in puffs on the crown of the head, and frizzes down on the forehead, in the very style now so much in vogue.

Dr. Goodwin arose on her entrance, and bowed with old-time stately courtesy. Then taking Gertrude by the hand, he said:

"Miss Greenleaf, permit me to present to you Miss Gertrude Haddon, the young lady of whom I spoke to you yesterday."

"Thanks, Dr. Goodwin, for bringing her so soon. My dear, you are welcome to Greenwood. I am very glad to see you. We are not quite strangers, you will remember," said Miss Greenleaf, taking the young girl's hand and kissing her cheek; the kindness of the lady's looks and tones compensating for the somewhat old-fashioned formality of her words.

"I thank you, dear madame, you are very good to remember me," answered Gertrude, in a low voice; for it was always difficult for her to speak to such a stately personage as Miss Sue.

"I should have been with you before this, Dr. Goodwin, but I was detained, as I hope Mr. Bowers explained to you, by that poor creature, Magdala, who has been roaming about the neighbourhood here for the last week, and who came to the house just now and insisted on seeing our young friend here. It was with some difficulty that I prevented her intrusion. However, I gave her an old guitar, and set her down on the south porch to strum it, and so I have succeeded in quieting her," said Miss Greenleaf, with a smile.

Dr. Goodwin and Gertrude exchanged glances, but neither of them spoke or thought it worth while to undeceive Miss Greenleaf. But Mr. Bowers took it upon himself to set her right, by exclaiming:

"Then she has outwitted you, Cousin Sue, for she has rushed in here and gave this lady a pretty fright."

"Now did she really? The cunning of these mad people! I hope she did not terrify you very much, my dear," said Miss Greenleaf, turning to the young girl.

"She gave me a little fright, but I have quite got over it, I assure you, madame," answered Gertrude, with a smile.

"That is right, my love. Dr. Goodwin, I have had your horse and carriage put up. I intend to keep you a prisoner here to-day," said Miss Sue.

"A most willing captive, dear madame," replied the doctor, with a deep bow.

"I thank you for surrendering so gracefully. It saves trouble. Come, my dear Miss Haddon, I will show you the room we have had prepared for you."

And instead of calling a servant, Miss Greenleaf, with her sweet old-time courtesy, herself conducted her young protégée to a pleasant chamber on the second floor.

It was a large and lofty room, immediately over the sisters' parlour, with snow-white bare walls, and yellow, polished, bare floor. The window curtains, bed draperies, dressing-table, chair, and sofa covers were all of white dimity. Bedstead, bureau, and washstand of curled mapel wood. Upon the whole, it was a spacious, clean, cool, and dainty room.

"My sister, Mrs. Fitzgerald, and my young niece, Patricia Fitzgerald, have the adjoining room, my dear. I trust you will be pleasant neighbours. Across the hall, Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald has the room opposite to this. I have the room at the back at hers, and opposite Patricia's. The gentlemen of the house, my dear, have their bedchambers in the other wing, over the drawing-room and long dining-room. My sister and myself do not think it convenient to have the gentlemens' apartments on the same side of the house with our own. Our new guest, Mr. Benjamin Bowers, has a room in what we call the garden wing—an extension of this end of the house. I hope you will find

every convenience you need here, my dear. I will send up your trunk directly, and also one of the maids to assist you. In an hour I will return to take you down to the drawing-room and introduce you to the young ladies of the family. Now, my dear, is there anything else I can do for you just at present?"

"Nothing, thank you, dear Miss Greenleaf. Indeed, you quite confuse me with all your goodness," said Gertrude, with a low voice and blushing cheek.

Miss Sue smiled and patted the girl's head, and withdrew from the room.

Gertrude went to the front window to look out upon the new scene while waiting for her trunk. The view was circumscribed. There was nothing to be seen but the deep green lawn, shaded here and there by heavy forest trees, and the surrounding forest enclosing it. But it was such an ample wealth of greenness.

"It is rightly called 'Greenwood.' I never saw so much unvaried verdure in my life," said Gertrude to herself, as she looked out upon it, tracing the grass-grown drive, by which she had reached the house, from its termination at the entrance-hall back to its junction with the forest-road.

As she looked, a gentleman on horseback, followed by a mounted groom, emerged from the forest-road, and cantered up the drive toward the house. And Gertrude's heart stood still, as she recognized in the foremost rider the commanding form and dark Italian beauty of Gerald Fitzgerald.

"Now, why does the sight of that gentleman disturb me so much? What does it mean? I never set my eyes on him before last night, and I never expected to see him again. He is nothing whatever to me! Can be nothing forever to me! Why do I think of him at all? Why do I grow sick at heart when I think of him as—as —Oh, Heaven, help me! I hope I am not growing morbid!" said the girl to herself, as she watched the stately horseman, until he drew rein at the house door, dismounted, threw the bridle to his groom, and disappeared within the doorway.

Gertrude was about to turn from the window, when the sound of wheels struck upon her ear, and the next moment she saw an open carriage issue from the forest-

road and turn into the drive coming toward the house. The carriage was drawn by a handsome pair of bay horses, and within it were seated three ladies—a fair and stately lady of about forty-five, dressed in elegant widow's mourning, an imperial dark-eyed beauty of twenty, in a carriage costume of dark-blue silk and black lace, and a young girl of fifteen, in a white muslin dress, red ribbons, and a straw hat. Gertrude guessed that these ladies were Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald and the Misses Geraldine and Patricia Fitzgerald.

The carriage drew up to the house and the ladies alighted and disappeared from view under the veranda.

A knock at her chamber door called Gertrude from the window.

She opened the door and found a negro man there with her trunk, and a quadroon girl waiting to serve her.

The man brought in the trunk and set it down, and having received the thanks of the young lady, together with a small gratuity, retired.

With the help of the little quadroon maid, she unpacked her trunk, arranged its contents in a wardrobe and in bureau drawers, and then changed her black cashmere travelling dress for a black silk, trimmed with crape, and finished with white crépe lisse ruff and cuffs.

When she was dressed she dismissed her little maid, and sat down, and waited for Miss Greenleaf to come and take her down into the parlour.

While she sat and waited there she heard the sound of many light footsteps on the stairs, which, lightly as they trod, rang clearly on the bare boards, for in this midsummer weather no carpets were laid down anywhere in Greenwood Farm-House.

The tripping steps came up into the upper hall, where they paused a moment, when the sound of girlish voices were heard.

"Yes!" cried one, in laughing tones. "'Young Lochinvar has come out from the West' at last. That is to say, Colonel Fitzgerald has arrived from Washington. Hannibal says he rode up here just ten minutes before our carriage turned into the yard. And his groom told the old man that his master reached Haddon's Ferry last night, and was brought over by Gertrude Haddon in the storm. What a brave girl that is by the

way! I am so glad she is coming to live here. I forgot to ask if she had arrived. Now, to return to young Lochinvar—that is to say, to Colonel Gerald Fitzgerald. Well, he reached the Summit Manor House some time between cock-crow and sunrise, and finding his 'fair Helen' flown, he scarcely stopped to change his dress and eat his breakfast before he set out for this house. And as I said before, he arrived about ten minutes ago. He will dine with us, of course. Look your best 'fair Helen.' Wear your peach-coloured taffeta and pearl jewellery."

"Have you quite done, Patricia, or are you only out of breath?" inquired a proud and measured voice.

"Quite done, Geraldine, unless you wish me to begin again," replied the saucy tones.

"Then all I have to say is, that if Colonel Fitzgerald is to dine here, I shall not go downstairs," said the cold and haughty voice.

"Oh! my dear, you are wrong. You are very wrong to trifle so with your happiness. You cannot suppose that Gerald Fitzgerald has been to blame in this unfortunate delay, or that he will brook even the suspicion of blame," spoke another and a graver voice than had yet been heard, that of Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald.

"Colonel Fitzgerald owes me an apology, madame! And until he makes it, I must decline to meet him," said Geraldine, loftily.

And then the voices passed out of hearing.

About fifteen minutes elapsed, and then the light footsteps and the voices were heard again in the hall, as the ladies went from their chambers down stairs to the drawing-room.

They had scarcely passed out of hearing when Miss Sue Greenleaf entered the room and said:

"I have come to take you down stairs, now, my love. How pretty you look! How very pretty you do look! You remind me of 'Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle.' Did you ever read that book, my dear? It is very touching. I have it, and will lend it to you if you would like to have it."

Gertrude thanked the lady and told her that she had not read the book, but would like very much to do so.

"Come, my dear, let us go down. We have an unexpected visitor—Colonel Fitzgerald, the betrothed husband of Geraldine, and one of the most elegant young men I have ever seen. He quite reminds me of Lord Mortimore, in the 'Children of the Abbey.'"

"I have met Colonel Fitzgerald. He crossed the ferry last night," said Gertrude, in a low voice, as she followed her conductress down stairs.

When they entered the drawing-room they found there the whole family circle and all their guests, with the exception of Geraldine Fitzgerald.

Royal Greenleaf left a group of ladies and gentlemen and came to welcome the ferry-girl, as if she had been a little princess.

Then Colonel Fitzgerald stepped out, and bending his dark eyes earnestly on the young stranger, with that fixed and wistful look, which was peculiar to them, said:

"This is indeed a surprise and a pleasure, Miss Haddon. I am very glad to see you here."

Gertrude bowed and cast down her eyes. She could not have answered him in words if her life had depended on her doing so.

"Miss Haddon is to be our guest for an unlimited period," said Miss Sue Greenleaf, kindly, as she passed on and presented her young protégée to her sister, Mrs. Fitzgerald.

Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald was older and handsomer than her sister Sue, to whom, however, she bore a very strong family likeness. She was clothed in a rich black silk dress and wore an elegant widow's cap. She received the orphan girl with great kindness and immediately introduced her to her own daughter, Patricia, who gave her a hearty kiss by way of welcome.

"We are waiting for Geraldine," said Mr. Royal Greenleaf, impatiently.

"Geraldine is too much indisposed to come down. We shall have to dine without her, I regret to say," Mrs. Doy explained.

"'Indisposed!' Yes, *indisposed to come*," whispered Patricia to Gertrude.

Dinner was announced. Mr. Royal Greenleaf gave his arm to his widowed sister, as he always did. Dr. Goodwin offered his to Miss Greenleaf. Mr. Ben Bowers

tucked Patricia's little hand under his wing. Then Colonel Fitzgerald came up to Gertrude, smiled, and offered his arm, saying:

"Shall I have the honour?"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MIGHTIEST SPELL.

GERTRUDE trembled with delight, shyness, and embarrassment, as Gerald Fitzgerald drew her arm within his own and followed the little procession of his elders into the dining-room.

With graceful courtesy he seated her at the table and took his place by her side. On his other side sat Patricia Fitzgerald. Opposite them Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald, with Doctor Goodwin on her right hand and Mr. Bowers on her left. At the head of the table Miss Sue Greenleaf, and at the foot, Mr. Royal.

Gertrude had eyes and ears for no one but the magician beside her. The "magician;" for consciously or unconsciously he had cast a spell over her from which nothing but death could ever disenchant her, if, indeed, death itself could have power to do so. She saw the "goodliest man," and seeing, "loved him with a love that was her doom"—not even knowing that she loved, only feeling thrilled with delight to be near him.

Do not blame her! She was but fifteen years of age and had never known a mother's care. She gave her soul away, rejoicing in the giving, not knowing what she did.

The dinner, because of the absence and sulkiness of Geraldine, was a dull one to everybody except Gertrude; to her it was delightful; for she sat next to one whom she was learning to worship with all her young heart's devotion, and who gave her his undivided attention.

But dullness and delight are equally evanescent. The

dinner came to an end at length, and the party adjourned to the drawing-room.

In those days and in that neighbourhood, it was not customary for the ladies to retire first from the dinner-table, leaving the gentlemen "to their wine;" but ladies and gentlemen left at the same time and in the order in which they had entered it.

Colonel Fitzgerald led Gertrude back to the drawing-room, placed her in a pleasant seat, bowed and left her. And the poor child, sitting alone, felt as if all the light and life of her soul had gone away with that stately soldier and accomplished gentleman.

Colonel Fitzgerald crossed the room to the bay-window, within which sat Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald and Patricia.

"I trust," he said, "that Geraldine's indisposition is not very serious?"

"Oh, no, it is not at all so," replied Mrs. Doy, with a slight smile.

"It does not confine her to her bed, I hope?"

"Oh, no."

"Then may I not hope for the pleasure of seeing her, if only for a few moments?"

"It is not likely that she can be induced to come down to-day."

"I do not presume to expect such a favour; but may I not be permitted to wait on her in her boudoir?"

"It is doubtful," answered Mrs. Doy, hesitatingly.

"Will you be so kind as to send this by a servant?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald, as he took a card from his pocket, wrote a few lines on it, inclosed it in a small envelope, and presented it to the lady.

"Give it to me, Colonel. I will take it up to Gerry myself, and bring you an answer," said Patricia, with eager kindness, as she intercepted his hand and took possession of the note before it had touched her mother's fingers.

"You are very good, my bright little cousin, and I thank you much. Pray add your entreaties to mine to gain me a hearing from my liege lady," said Gerald Fitzgerald, gayly, as he arose and opened the door, and held it until Patricia had darted through it. She sped up stairs and into Geraldine's chamber.

Geraldine had changed her carriage dress for a white

India muslin robe-de-chamber, and she lay reclining on the sofa, while her untasted dinner stood on a little table beside her, and her French maid loitered in attendance.

"Gerry, if you will send Mademoiselle away, I have something to show you," said Patricia.

"Leave the room, Desirée, if you please. I will ring when I want you," said Geraldine, languidly.

The girl courtesied and withdrew.

"What is it that you want to show me, Patricia?" inquired the young lady, with an air of perfect indifference.

"This, Gerry, dear," answered Patricia, giving her the colonel's card.

Geraldine received it very coldly, drew it from its envelope, and read:

"My Own Geraldine.—I am grieved to hear that you are not well; yet Mrs. Fitzgerald gives me hopes that you are not so *un*well as to preclude the possibility of your receiving me in your boudoir. May I come and give an account of myself?"

"Do you know the purport of this note?" inquired Geraldine, looking up from the card.

"I can guess it. Colonel Fitz wants to see his dear Gerry," saucily replied Patricia.

Geraldine's proud eyes flashed fire for an instant, and then fell again upon the card.

"If *I* were his dear Gerry, I would pocket all my just indignation and see him," added Patricia.

"Why, pray?" inquired Geraldine, with a curling lip, and without raising her eyes from the card.

"Because I would not fling his heart away lest some other fellow should catch it in the rebound and keep it," replied Patricia, meaningly.

"Pray explain yourself," said Geraldine.

"Well, then, I will. There is just the very loveliest brown-eyed beauty down-stairs that ever was seen in this world. Colonel Fitz took her into dinner, placed himself beside her at table, devoted himself to her, brought her back to the drawing-room, seated her as if she had been a queen, and bowed over her hand when he

left her. And she—she worshipped him with her soft, shy, meek, brown eyes, as only such an unsophisticated child could do. Well, you know any man's vanity is his weakest point, anyhow, and so 'a word to the wise is sufficient for them.'"

"*Who* and what on earth are you talking about, Patricia?" haughtily demanded Geraldine.

"B-o-o-o-o! Don't flash your blazing black eyes at *me*, Gerry; for, not being afraid of them, I am perfectly impenetrable! Reserve your fire for the gallant Fitz. It is of him I talk, and of the dove-eyed darling who is melting his heroic heart," replied Pat, mischievously.

"Who is this girl, then?" sharply demanded Geraldine, completely thrown off her guard.

"Who but Miss Sue's last heroine."

"'Miss Sue's last heroine!' What nonsense are you talking?"

"No nonsense at all. You don't know our Aunt Sue as well as I do, or you would understand me. Aunt Sue is always trying to realize her romances, but they always prove failures. Once she tried to make Magdala to be a ship-wrecked princess, or something of the sort, but Magdala turned out to be a mad woman, pure and simple, and nothing else. Then she tried to transfigure Ben Bowers into a disinherited knight; but he persisted in remaining a lazy, idle, sensual spendthrift, a good-for-nothing dead beat, who had squandered his own fortune, and was doing the best he could to squander those of other people!"

"What do you suppose I care for all this, Patricia? I inquired of you who is this girl of whom you have been talking," exclaimed Geraldine.

"That is just what I'm coming to, ma'am. 'This girl' is our Aunt Sue's latest romance. I don't know whom she identifies her with—whether with Armanda, Evilina, Isabella, or whom. But she has certainly taken a great shine to her," said Pat, provokingly.

"But who is she, then?"

"My good gracious me alive, haven't I told you who she is? Dr. Goodwin's ward, old Gabriel Haddon's heiress, Aunt Sue's protégée—Gertrude Haddon," exclaimed Patricia, in a tone of surprise, expressive of having given this explanation long ago.

"'Gertrude Haddon!'" echoed Miss Fitzgerald.

"The same," replied Patricia, with comic gravity.

"A common ferry-girl!" commented Geraldine, in a tone of disgust.

"Begging your pardon, no, ma'am! not a common ferry-girl, by any means. A very *un*common ferry-girl! a born beauty! a princess in disguise! the ideal of Miss Susan Greenleaf! the enslaver of the gallant Fritz! the rival, if she doesn't look to her laurels, of the queenly Geraldine!" said Patricia, with pretended enthusiasm.

The eyes of the beauty smouldered and flashed.

"And do you presume to suppose," she began, "that I would descend for one instant to such a base, degrading rivalry?"

"Oh, no! I never presumed to suppose anything. I only warn you," said Pat, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Then I hope that for the future you will be a little more discreet in the use of your tongue, Patricia."

"Certainly, and to begin with being discreet, what am I to say to him who sent me?" inquired the girl.

Geraldine took up her lover's card and read it again, murmuring over to herself the last lines, "May I come and give an account of myself?" and adding aloud:

"It may be well if he can do so."

"Shall I say that to him?" saucily inquired Pat.

"Say to Colonel Fitzgerald that I will see him in the little parlour."

"Aunt Sue's parlour?" questioned Pat.

"Yes," curtly replied Geraldine.

Patricia arose, and gayly humming a tune, left the room.

Geraldine rang for her maid, and when Mademoiselle Desirée entered, said:

"Dress me quickly. I shall join the circle in the drawing-room."

"What dress will Mademoiselle please to wear?" respectfully inquired the girl.

"Black Spanish lace robe, diamond jewellery, scarlet fuschia flowers."

The quick and skilful fingers of the French maid soon completed the toilet of the beautiful Geraldine, and lastly, placed in her hand a black feather fan, adorned in the middle by a humming bird.

Then Geraldine descended the stairs. Both the front and back doors of the central hall stood open on this warm July evening; but the hall itself was deserted. Geraldine turned and opened the door leading into the Sisters' Parlour, which we have already described.

Colonel Fitzgerald was already there, standing by the fire place, with his elbow leaning on the mantel-piece.

"My dear Geraldine!" he warmly exclaimed, hastening to meet her with outstretched hand.

But she drew haughtily back, passed him, and seated herself in the high-backed armed-chair, saying coldly:

"You expressed a wish to see me, sir, that you might give some account of yourself, which would certainly seem to be called for! You see me, and I am ready to hear you."

Gerald Fitzgerald stood for a moment transfixed with amazement by the manner of his betrothed wife. He had known her from her childhood, but had never seen her in such a mood before—never even imagined it to be possible that she could ever show such a proud and scornful spirit. In another moment, however, he recovered himself and went to her, saying earnestly:

"Geraldine, it is not possible that you are offended with me?" She did not deign to answer him even by a look, but kept her eyes fixed upon the humming-bird on her fan, whose brilliant plumage she was smoothing down.

"Geraldine, *have* I been so unhappy as to offend you?"

She smiled scornfully, but did not reply either by word or glance.

"Will you not speak to me, Geraldine?" he earnestly pleaded, standing before her.

"I understood, Colonel Fitzgerald, that you desired to see me for the purpose of giving some account of your very strange conduct, which seems to be called for, and not to question me. I am ready to hear anything you may have to say, but I must request you to be brief, as my time is limited," she said, with cool insolence.

"My dear girl, it seems I have really been so stupid or so unfortunate as to have unwittingly offended you, though in what matter I cannot see! Surely, surely, it cannot be the delay of my arrival that has annoyed you? Certainly you must have known, and must know, that

my cruel detention in Washington was much more painful and embarrassing to me, that it could possibly have been to you, especially as I was unable then, and indeed am unable now, to explain it. Assuredly, my dearest one, you must know the fault was not mine."

"I know nothing of the sort, Colonel Fitzgerald!" exclaimed Geraldine, rising and beginning to lose her proud self-control. "I know nothing of the sort, and I do not even believe you, when you tell me the fault was not yours."

"Miss Fitzgerald!" exclaimed the colonel, as the hot blood rushed to his face and crimsoned his brow.

"No, sir, I neither know what you *say* I know, nor believe what you tell me! But I *do* know that you have dared to put upon me the most insolent affront, the most degrading insult that any man could ever offer to any woman, such as *no gentleman* ever before offered! Such as no lady ever received! Such as *you*, Colonel Fitzgerald, would never have *dared* to offer to me, had I possessed a father's or a brother's protection! But I was defenceless, and you thought you could affront and insult me with impunity!" she continued, vehemently, casting all reserve to the winds.

"Geraldine!" said her lover, sternly, "not even from *you* will I endure such charges!—not even from *you*, deeply as I love you!"

"'*Love*' *me!*" she echoed, with supreme scorn. "Little you 'love,' or *ever* loved *me*, Gerald Fitzgerald! You loved my broad lands and spacious manor halls, but little you loved me!"

"Geraldine!" he exclaimed, crimsoning.

"It was a very great thing for the penniless cadet, the government pauper, wearing the livery of the United States, to aspire to the heiress of half a dozen manors and a half a thousand slaves! And a very shrewd thing to entrap the infant orphan into a betrothal that deprived her of her freedom of choice before she could understand the meaning of the ceremony! A fine stroke of diplomacy!"

"Geraldine! Be silent!" he exclaimed, shaking with emotion.

But regardless that she was lashing his high spirit to frenzy, she continued in withering scorn:

"And I presume, if your elder brother had lived, you would have been so good as to have married the young heiress and squandered her fortune for her. But your elder brother died, and enriched you by his death. It was no longer necessary that you should *marry for a living*, or even continue to be a government pauper! You had greater liberty of choice both in the selection of a wife and a career. So you began to neglect your betrothed and to defer the fulfilment of your engagement, expecting, of course, that she should see your meaning and release you from your bond. But she proved to be so blind that you were compelled to open her eyes by an open and public affront! So you failed to keep your appointment with her on your wedding-day! Colonel Fitzgerald, she understands you at last, and she releases you from your betrothal!" concluded Geraldine, drawing from her finger the magnificent solitaire diamond that he had placed on it five years before, and handing it to him.

"Miss Fitzgerald, I accept my release, and I thank you for it. I think you are quite right. The man who could act from the motives you have ascribed to me is certainly unworthy to be your husband. On the other hand, the woman who could conceive such motives in my conduct can never be my wife. Good-evening, madam."

And with a face livid with suppressed passion, Gerald Fitzgerald bowed and withdrew from the room.

Geraldine had not expected this result. With all the strength and fire of her impassioned Irish-Italian race she loved her betrothed husband.

Out of this burning love had blazed up the furious jealousy which had inspired those bitter words of scorn and hatred with which she had driven him from her presence—words that could never be forgotten.

But she had not thought that he would so suddenly have acted upon them. She had supposed that her charges against him would have been repelled with denial in self-defence, and that her rash sentence of banishment upon him would have been met by hesitation and expostulation.

She had not paused to take into consideration the high haughty spirit of Fitzgerald, which could no more have

deigned to deny or defend himself against her degrading accusations than he would have stooped to the base conduct with which she charged him.

Simply, without condescending to denial or self-defence, he had taken her at her word and departed, leaving her in despair.

Her jealous rage had spent its utmost fury. The reaction had already commenced. She threw up her arms with a gesture of desperation, dropped upon the sofa, buried her face in the cushions, and burst into wild tears and sobs.

Meanwhile Gerald Fitzgerald quickly passed out of the great central hall by the front door, and, bare-headed as he was, walked up and down before the house to cool himself down, and recover his composure, before returning to the drawing-room.

It was a clear and brilliant starlight night, and the midsummer air was cooled with a heavy dew and light breeze. While he walked to and fro on the deep grass, he espied Hannibal, the little old groom, sitting at the foot of one of the great elm trees, regardless of the damp ground, and enjoying the aromatic luxury of smoking a corn cob pipe.

Colonel Fitzgerald called the old negro, and beckoned him to approach.

Hannibal started to his feet and skipped up to the gentleman, as nimbly as if he had been only nineteen instead of ninety.

"Old man, do me the favour to go to the stables and order my horse to be saddled and brought around," said Colonel Fitzgerald, quietly.

"Sartainly, Marse Gen'al, if you says so, dough I hopes you ain't a thinkin' ob returnin' away from de house to-night, sar," replied the groom, with all the freedom of a favoured old family servant.

"Thanks, Hannibal; but affairs call me away and I must go. You will oblige me by obeying orders."

"In course, Marse Gen'al, jes' as you say, sar," replied Hannibal, with a bow, as he turned and skipped off in the direction of the stables.

Gerald Fitzgerald, having recovered his self-possession, returned to the house and re-entered the drawing-room, where he found the circle there enjoying themselves in

their own way. Mr. Royal Greenleaf, Ben Bowers, Mrs. Doy, and Miss Sue were assembled around a card-table, profoundly interested in a game of whist in which Mr. Bowers and Mrs. Doy appeared to be beating their antagonists, Mr. Royal and Miss Sue.

Gertrude and Patricia sat side by side on the sofa, falling in love with each other after the manner of very young girls. Dr. Goodwin had retired to rest.

At the entrance of Colonel Fitzgerald, the whist party all politely discontinued their game.

"Pray do not let me interrupt you," said Fitzgerald, courteously.

"Take my place, Colonel, *do*—I am getting so badly beaten that I am disgusted!" exclaimed Royal Greenleaf, rising and offering his chair. "Do take my place and see if you can beat our antagonists here as easily as you once beat the Comanche and Apache Indians."

"No, take *mine*, Colonel! Ours is the victorious side!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, also rising.

"Thanks, gentlemen, both; but I have only looked in to say good-night. My horse is at the door," said Colonel Fitzgerald, smiling.

A perfect volley of remonstrance and expostulation followed. No one would hear of his going.

But the Colonel met all resistance with smiling firmness, and when the old groom Hannibal appeared at the drawing-room door and announced that "Marse Gen'al's" horse was saddled and bridled, and attending his pleasure, Colonel Fitzgerald took leave of his friends, mounted his horse, and rode away from Greenwood, followed by his servant.

"I'll bet anything in the world Gerry is at the bottom of all this. She has sent him away with 'a flea in his lug,'" whispered Patricia, to her new friend.

"With a—what?" inquired Gertrude, in perplexity.

"With 'a flea in his lug,' my dear. With biting reproaches ringing through his ears. Ah! that Gerry of ours is *inyuns* when she gets ready!"

"She is—what?" questioned Gertrude.

"Inyuns! inyuns! Onions! onions! Biting, pungent, when she's vexed!"

"Oh!" said Gertrude, falling into deep thought about something else.

"Yes, Gerry has quarrelled with him and driven him away, just as sure as shooting! She'll repent it too! See if she don't!"

While this little whispered conversation was going on between the two girls, the members of the whist party, who had reseated themselves at the card-table, and recommenced their game, were also discussing the mystery of the gallant soldier's abrupt departure.

"What's the matter with the colonel to-night? He looked for all the world as if he had been put to the torture by those red devils of the frontier he has been fighting so long," said Mr. Ben Bowers, as he trumped Royal Greenleaf's ace and took the trick.

"I don't know, I am sure! But he shall give a good reason for leaving us so abruptly, or quarrel with me to-morrow!" exclaimed the hospitable, hot-tempered master of Greenwood.

"I think you need not go far, for a reason, brother," observed the gentle Miss Sue. "You know that old Mr. Fitzgerald is suffering from an unusually severe attack of the gout, and none of his family is home with him. His son, the colonel, has been too much away from him already. You cannot wonder that Colonel Fitzgerald should feel it his duty to return to the Summit to-night, without thinking it necessary, or even graceful, to make an explanation that would seem to be a parading of his filial piety."

"Phew! Have you done? And are you not out of breath? What a long speech in defence of the colonel!" said Royal Greenleaf, as he laid his king of trumps upon Ben Bowers' ace of hearts.

Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald said nothing, though she had good grounds for suspecting that old Mr. Fitzgerald's illness had little to do with Colonel Fitzgerald's abrupt departure. She quietly laid her ace of trumps upon her brother's king, remarking:

"The odd trick! This gives us the game, and the game gives us the rub! We have beaten them again, Mr. Bowers!"

"*We* always beat when we are *partners*, Mrs. Fitzgerald! Oh, that we could be partners for life! Then we should always, and in all things, be victorious!" whispered Mr. Bowers.

"It is eleven o'clock. Royal, ring for the bed-room candles," said Mrs. Doy.

The request was complied with; the candles were brought. The circle separated and retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FITZGERALD TEMPER.

GERALDINE FITZGERALD, prostrated by the violence of her own passions, lay upon the sofa in the library, with her face buried in its cushions, weeping until Numo, the hall footman, believing the room to be vacant, came in to close the windows and put out the lights. Not seeing the lady, whose black lace dress, as she lay on the dark green sofa at the shadiest end of the apartment, rendered her form invisible, the servant performed his duties and went out, closing the door after him, and leaving her in total darkness.

Then she lifted her head and listened. Not hearing any sound of voices or steps, in the hall without, she softly arose and left the library, and glided up to her own room, where she locked herself in, lest any one should see her in this degradation of grief for a banished lover.

She did not even ring for her maid, but threw herself dressed as she was on the outside of the bed, where she lay waking and weeping all night.

Long the little French girl sat up in her room that night, waiting to hear her mistress's summons, until at length, worn out with watching, she too lay down in her clothes on the outside of the bed, to rest while listening for her lady's bell, until near morning, when she fell asleep, and as a natural consequence overslept.

There was another pair of sleepless young eyes in Greenwood that night, but they were not sleepless from watching or weeping—quite the contrary; they were wide awake in a reverie too delicious to be lost in

dreams—a reverie of most delightful retrospection and contemplation. Gertrude, lying in her strange bed at Greenwood, lived over again every incident of the two happy evenings she had spent in the company of Gerald Fitzgerald. She saw him again in every attitude of his stately and soldierly form, in every expression of his handsome and eloquent face. She heard him again in every tone of his deep, full, melodious voice, and in her vivid memory every aspect of his martial form was full of majestic beauty, every intonation of his mellifluous voice full of divine music.

You see the poor child was falling in love, and did not suspect it, did not even dream of the folly and danger of allowing her heart to become interested in a gentleman much beyond her in years, far above her in rank, one of the high Fitzgeralds who never had condescended to a mésalliance, one, too, who was betrothed to a lady of his own rank and whom, though he had been insulted, outraged, and banished by her, he still passionately worshipped.

Gertrude's love, the love that was to influence her whole life for weal or for woe was a religion from the very beginning. This was the reason, perhaps, why she did not recognize it a dangerous human passion and be on her guard against it. It was a religion from the beginning. It was a religious rapture to lie there in the silence and darkness of her chamber, and give up her soul to the contemplation of her idol. There was not the least alloy of self in all her thoughts of him. She never associated herself with him in her imaginings. At this stage she never even desired his personal presence. At this time it was enough for her happiness to have seen and known him as the most admirable expression of manly excellence she had ever imagined.

She thought of his trouble with his betrothed, and she felt sure that whatever might have been the cause of his detention from his bride on the day appointed for their wedding, it must have been an honourable and heroic one. She wondered how any woman acquainted with him from childhood as Miss Fitzgerald had been could possibly have doubted his perfect integrity—how any woman blessed with his love as Miss Fitzgerald was could ever have banished him from her presence.

To Gertrude's worshipping heart to distrust Gerald Fitzgerald seemed impiety and to accuse him seemed blasphemy.

Then she closed her eyes and folded her hands and prayed like any little puritan, that Geraldine Fitzgerald might be brought to a sense of her great injustice and be reconciled to her incomparable lover, and that both might be saved and blessed in this life and in the next. And after this prayer she fell asleep.

But Geraldine outwatched the stars that night, and saw what she had very seldom seen in the whole course of her life, the very first rays of the rising sun stream through the east window of her bed-chamber, whose shutters her maid had not been called in to close.

They were all early risers in Greenwood, and Geraldine got up, not only from force of habit, but from weariness of lying on a bed where she could not sleep.

She went to the mirror and looked at herself, and shrunk with a shudder from the image reflected there. The stormy passions of the preceding day and night had left their traces there—her face was pale and wan; her eyes red and sunken; her brow corrugated. Her black lace dress, in which she had thrown herself down on the bed and tumbled about in her anguish all night, was crumpled; the beautiful crimson fuschias on her breast were withered and dead.

"Like my life!" she said, as she tenderly detached them from her bosom, and softly dropped them from a window down on the dewy grass below.

"I must not go down stairs with this face. I must keep my room until I recover my natural looks. Shall I plead a headache? A shallow woman in my case would do so, whether she had one or not, and I might do so with truth, for my head does ache—ah! as much as my heart. But I will not plead a headache; the plea is too stale; besides, though it might account for my pale face, it would not for my red eyes. No, I will call it a cold, or a very bad cold, attended with inflamed eyes. That will account for everything. And now to prepare for my sharp-eyed, inquisitive little maid," she murmured to herself, as she hastily took off her jewels, her laces, her black dress, and exchanged it for a night-gown. Then she unlocked her door, rang for her maid, and got into

bed that she might seem to have slept there as usual all night.

There was some delay before Mademoiselle Desirée entered the chamber of her mistress, for the little maid had overslept herself, and had slept heavily until awakened by the sound of her lady's bell. Then she had dressed herself in haste to obey its call.

"Shall I prepare Mademoiselle's bath?" respectfully inquired the girl.

"No, I shall not rise to-day, Desirée. I have caught a violent cold. Tell the ladies of the house so, and bring me a cup of tea."

"*Ah!* I am very sorry to hear it, Mademoiselle. Will Mademoiselle have toast with her tea?"

"No, nothing but the tea," said Geraldine, turning her face to the wall.

The little French maid tripped down stairs to make a sensation in the housekeeper's room by reporting Mademoiselle Feetzgerald vera seek.

And so Miss Sue Greenleaf with her own hands carried up a cup of tea to the supposed invalid, who, to keep up appearances, began to cough.

"I see that you have really got a terrible cold, my dear girl. You must lie quietly in bed for a few days until you get rid of it. I, or my sister Doy, or one of the young girls, will be pleased to sit with you every day until you get better," said gentle Miss Sue, as she sat down by the bedside and waited until Geraldine had drank the tea, returned the cup, and thanked her hostess.

Then Miss Sue went down stairs to join the family-circle at breakfast, and to tell them that Geraldine was confined to her room with a very bad cold.

"Bad cold, eh!" exclaimed saucy Pat. "Well, if she has got a bad cold, it's my opinion that she has sent Colonel Gerry away with a worse one."

"Hush, Patricia. Make no remarks," said Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald, gravely.

Nothing more was said on the subject of Geraldine's "cold" during breakfast.

When it was over, Dr. Goodwin, who had remained all night at Greenwood, requested that his carriage might be brought to the door, as he should be obliged to return home.

Hospitable entreaties were pressed upon him to stay and spend the day, but as the doctor assured them that it was impossible for him to do so without a grave neglect of duty, they yielded the point, and Royal Greenleaf gave the necessary orders to the grooms. Then Gertrude went up to the minister and timidly said:

"Dr. Goodwin, may I speak to you for a few moments?"

"Certainly, my dear. What is it?"

"I would like to see you quite alone, if you please, sir."

"Then you shall do so, my child. Miss Greenleaf," he said, turning to the lady of the house, "will you allow me to take my ward into your parlour for a consultation?"

"Dr. Goodwin, your ward and my guest may take *you* into any room in the house that she pleases," answered Miss Sue, with a smile.

"Thank you, Miss Greenleaf. Come, Dr. Goodwin, I will be your conductor to the sisters' parlour," said Gertrude, leading the way thither.

When the minister and the young girl reached the sanctum, he dropped heavily into a large easy-chair, and she drew a low one to his side, and seated herself.

"Now, then, my little ward, what have you to say to me — something in relation to your valuable inheritance at Haddon's Ferry?" cheerfully inquired the doctor.

"Dr. Goodwin, I have really no right to the inheritance of Haddon's Ferry. That is what I have been so anxious to tell you ever since dear grandfather passed away, but I have had no good opportunity until now of entering into the necessary explanations. But indeed I have no right to Haddon's Ferry, or to anything else that my dear grandfather left."

"I do not know why you should think so, my dear," said the good minister, with a perplexed look.

"In the first place, you know, Dr. Goodwin, that I am not really Gabriel Haddon's grandchild."

"I know that, my dear; and I fancy our neighbours all know that as well as ourselves. But you do not inherit Haddon's Ferry as the heiress-at-law, but as the heiress according to the last will and testament of the

late Gabriel Haddon, which gives you an indisputable legal title to the property, Gertrude."

"Yes, Dr. Goodwin, a legal title, not a moral right."

"I wonder you should persist in saying so, my child; why do you do it?"

"Because it is true, Dr. Goodwin, for if grandfather had lived a few days longer, he would have altered his will."

"I do not think so. Why on earth should he have done it?"

"If he had only lived to do it, he would have told you why, Dr. Goodwin."

"Gertrude, you puzzle me, my child. I cannot even conjecture what you mean. Pray, explain yourself," said the bewildered doctor.

"I will. Dr. Goodwin, did you ever know that my grandfather was married in his early youth?"

"Certainly, my child, I know the whole story of that disastrous marriage," said the doctor, with a sigh.

"Do you know the sequel of that marriage, sir?"

"The sequel, my dear? I know the young wife, after she was torn from the arms of her husband, died of a broken heart, and was brought home and buried in the family vault, at Hill Top Hall, and that her bereaved husband never married again. That is all I know about it."

"Then my grandfather never confided to you the secret of the confession made to him by old General Slaughter on his deathbed?"

"Why, no! I never once saw Mr. Haddon alive after the death of old General Slaughter!" exclaimed the good doctor.

"He lived but three days after," said Gertrude, with a deep sigh. "If he had lived long enough to see you, he would have confided the secret to you as he did to me. But he was called away before he could do so, leaving that and some other things for me to do."

"What was that secret, my dear girl?" inquired the doctor, with some interest.

"Dr. Goodwin, the young wife of Gabriel Haddon left a child, a girl, which was taken from her possession and left somewhere in London, when she was brought back to die."

"My dear Gertrude! What is this you tell me?" exclaimed the old minister, in profound amazement.

"The solemn, sorrowful truth, dear Dr. Goodwin, as I received it from my grandfather, to whom it was confessed by old General Slaughter on his deathbed."

"And what became of the child?" inquired the good doctor, anxiously.

"No living person knows. She was abandoned in the city of London!"

"Did the wretched old man keep no oversight of the babe whatever?"

"Apparently not. He happened to have obtained or remembered the address of the private hospital where the unhappy young wife became a mother, and of the woman in whose charge the poor forsaken child was afterwards placed. He gave these addresses to my grandfather, who made a note of them on the spot. I have this memoranda, and that is the only clue I possess from which to direct the search for the missing heiress—for, Dr. Goodwin, you know that she must be sought for. If she should be living, she would now be a middle-aged woman, and the heiress, not only of Haddon's Ferry, but also in right of her mother of Hill Top Hall, Stonylonesome Island, and other manors."

"Most assuredly she would be so," said Dr. Goodwin, thoughtfully.

"My grandfather meant to have started immediately to England in quest of his lost daughter; but the summons came that called him to another life. It is now my duty to prosecute what he had not time to commence. I know that it is my bounden duty to do it, and I am resolved to do it immediately; but I do not know how to commence. You are my guardian and trustee, Dr. Goodwin, and I come to you for advice and assistance in this matter. I want you, if you please, to take the proper steps, employ the proper persons and to raise the necessary funds to prosecute the search on the property of Haddon's Ferry. Will you do this for me?"

"Assuredly I will, my dear. But bless my soul alive! if this daughter of Gabriel Haddon and Lily Vale should be found, she will not only inherit Haddon's Ferry, Hill Top Hall, Stonylonesome Island, but she will strip the

great heiress, Geraldine Fitzgerald, of all her vast possessions."

"Indeed! Can that be so? I thought that Miss Fitzgerald inherited directly from her parents," said Gertrude, in surprise.

"So she did; but her parents inherited in right of Italia Fitzgerald, who was the wife of General Slaughter and the direct ancestress of this missing heiress. It was only in the apparent default of direct heirs of Italia Fitzgerald, the greatest heiress of her time, that the father of Geraldine succeeded to her many manors. But we must look the lost heiress up, though her discovery should cause a revolution."

"Please, sar, de doctor's gig is at de door," said the footman, Numo, putting his head in at the door.

"My dear, I must leave you now. I will begin immediately to attend to this matter. I would say nothing more about it to anyone just at present. I will see you again in a few days. Good-by, my love," said the good doctor, as he pressed the hand of Gertrude and left the room.

In a few moments she heard the sound of his carriage-wheels, as they rolled away, taking him from the hospitable shades of Greenwood.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DISCARDED LOVER.

COLONEL FITZGERALD rode rapidly away toward the Summit, leaving his groom far behind. Though he did not spare his horse, it was an hour after midnight when he clattered up to the porter's lodge, and with shouts and missiles thrown at the side of the house, succeeded in rousing the old man, who had been sound asleep in his bed since nine o'clock that evening.

"Lord, save us, Marse Gerald, sar, is anybody dead, or dying at Greenwood, that your honour comes a rushin' home at this time o' night, sar?" anxiously inquired the astonished porter, as he slowly unlocked the gate and swung it wide open to let the Colonel ride through.

"Nothing has happened, Nimrod," answered the young officer, as he cantered into the park and rode up the long avenue leading to the house.

But his approach was not undisturbed. A volley of barks saluted him from the kennels and the stable-yard, where the dogs were chained near enough to perceive the entrance of a horseman, but too far to identify him as their master.

The outcry of the dogs roused up little old Hassan, the most vigilant of sentinels, and the bravest of defenders.

"Who dar?" he cried, rushing from his den in the stable-yard, and bringing in his hands a huge blunderbuss, which he did not hesitate to level at the unknown intruder, as he continued with a roar:

"Oh, you sheep-stealing vilyun, *I* knows you! Stop jest where you is, you white herrin', or I'll put a bullet through your brains, quicker'n you kin say Jack Sprat! Stop where you is, I tell you!"

"Don't be a fool, Hassan. It is I, your master. Quiet those dogs and then come and take my horse," said Colonel Fitzgerald, as he allowed his tired horse to fall into a leisurely walk.

"Now de lors hab mercy on my fool head!" groaned Hassan, as he lowered his weapon with a look of consternation. "'Deed, I begs ten millun hundred pardons, Marse Colonel; but who'd 'a' t'ought to see you coming home dis unreputable time o' de night? Bofe me and de dogs take you to be dat dere sheep-stealing Jim Hice—deed, we!"

"Thank you, Hassan. Yours is not the first backhanded compliment I have received to-night. So you and the dogs took me to be Jim Hice?" laughed Gerald Fitzgerald, as he walked his horse slowly on.

"Yes, Marse Colonel, but we knows better now, bofe me and de dogs. We knowed you as soon 's ebber we heered your wice, bofe me and de dogs. Listen. Dey's quiet now, sar, and 'dout my havin' to speak to 'em

eider," Hassan explained, as he ran along beside his master's horse.

"I am afraid that they have all been gone to bed so long that it will be difficult to arouse any of the servants without disturbing my father," said Colonel Fitzgerald, as they approached the house.

"I's afeard so myself, marster, indeed, sar," assented Hassan.

But a turn in the avenue showed them the front of the house, with lights glancing from window to window.

"Some one is up! Something is the matter! My father! He was no worse than usual when I left him at noon. Have you heard from him since that, Hassan?" anxiously demanded Colonel Fitzgerald, as he sprung from his horse and threw the reins to the old groom.

"Well, yes, sar; old marse was well as usual at half arter eight o'clock to-night, when he sent down de mail-bags to de stable, chuck full o' letters, wid orders that dey should be tuk to Wildewille pos' office fus' fing dis mornen. Ole marse all right den, caze I ax Peter an' he tell me so," answered Hassan.

Meanwhile Colonel Fitzgerald had run up the steps and was loudly knocking at the door.

It was opened by Peter, the footman, who, on seeing his young master, cried out:

"Oh, Marse Colonel! Oh, Marse Colonel!" and burst into irrepressible sobs and tears.

"In the name of Heaven what is the matter? What has happened?" demanded Gerald Fitzgerald, as he pushed past the servant.

"Oh, Marse Colonel! It is ole marse!" cried the boy, weeping aloud.

Gerald Fitzgerald hurried past, and ran up stairs to his father's room. He paused for a minute at the door to compose himself; for he was unwilling to enter a sick man's presence in a state of agitation. Then he softly opened the door and walked in.

The room was brightly lighted up, and half a dozen of the house-servants were gathered around the high four-post bedstead that stood in the middle of the floor. Swiftly and softly Gerald Fitzgerald stepped up to it. The servants made way for him.

There lay the form of his father, extended at full length, quite insensible, though still living. A strong smell of camphor filled the air.

"Oh! Marse Colonel, what a blessing you've come," cried old Het, the housekeeper.

"Have you sent for a doctor?" inquired Gerald Fitzgerald, in a voice that he could scarcely render steady as he laid his hand over the feebly beating heart of his father.

"Oh! no, Marse Colonel, seem like we was all panic-struck and 'stracted, and didn't know what to do! What a blessing you've come!" cried Het.

Without waiting to hear her out, Gerald Fitzgerald hastened down stairs and dispatched Peter in great haste to the stable, with directions to saddle the swiftest horse and fly as if for his life to Wildeville, find Dr. Burton, their family physician, tell him that Mr. Fitzgerald was in extremity, and bring him with all speed to the Summit.

Then he hurried back to his father's bedside, where he found all the household servants reassembled, and old Het standing over him bathing his head and face with spirits of camphor, and her own falling tears as she tried these ineffectual means to restore him to consciousness.

Again the servants gave way for the sorrow-stricken son, who came up and made a more careful examination of the patient than before.

He found the body deathly cold, the heart beating slowly, the pulse scarcely perceptible. He now commenced the active treatment that his imperfect experience suggested. He sent the women servants off in different directions, one to bring bottles of hot water, another to prepare mustard poultices, a third to bring hot brandy, a fourth for hartshorn. They flew to do his bidding, and returned in an incredibly short time with all the remedies he had sent for. These were all applied with promptitude and great care, but without the least effect. After working over their patient for an hour without the slightest encouragement to persevere, Gerald Fitzgerald gave over, saying:

"We must wait for the arrival of Dr. Burton. Nothing more can be done until he comes. Darken the room. Put out all the lights except one. And let every man

and woman of you return to the servants' hall except Hester." His orders were quickly obeyed. When he found himself alone in the room with the old housekeeper, he threw himself, exhausted, into the easy-chair at the head of his father's bed, and beckoned Het to come and seat herself near him.

She came up, weeping softly behind the white apron that she held to her eyes, and courtesying respectfully, sat down in the chair her master had pointed out.

"Now, Hester, tell me all about this attack. I left your old master as well as he has been at any time within the last few weeks. I come back after an absence of a few hours to find him in this state! When did this fit size him? How did it happen? What caused it? Come, you are an experienced woman—you can tell me."

"Oh, Marse Gerald! It was all de doings ob dat dere crazy moonatic, Malady! Nobody but she!" said Het, with heavy sobs.

"Magdala!" exclaimed Gerald Fitzgerald, in surprise.

"Just nobody but dat run-mad moonatic, nobody but she! which all sich should be shot up in a mad-house and dere kept till deaf do 'em part!" sobbed Het.

"But Magdala! that poor, harmless wanderer! I cannot see how she should have disturbed my father. Explain yourself, Hester."

"Oh, Marse Colonel, it was jest dis-a-way. It was 'bout 'leven o'clock, an' me an' Jeremy a-sittin' up in de kitchen beyant our bed-time, 'case ole marse hadn't ringed his bell for his pitcher of ice-water to make his punch, an' we much as our lives worf to sturve him 'dout he ring for us, or go to bed eider 'fore he tell us he done wid us for de night. And so we sat dere, ole Jeremy an' me, on de steps ob de kitchen door, 'case it war so hot in de house we couldn't hardly breave. I nebber did see sich a hot summer in all my life. Don't hardly cool off even at night."

"Never mind the weather, Hester. Tell me about your master," said Colonel Fitzgerald, impatiently.

"I gwine to tell you, honey, 'deed I is. So me an' Jeremy, we sat dere, catchin' our breaf in de heat till de clock struck 'leven, and say ole Jeremy:

"'I wonner w'at de matter long o' ole marse, he don't ring for his ice-water?'

"'I dunno,' I say. 'I 'spects he busy writin' letters.'

"'Oh, g' long 'way from here wid your letters,' Jeremy say. 'Ole marse done writ all his letters, and fill his mail-bag choke full, and sent it wid me down to de stable more'n two hours ago,' he say. Den arter dat I didn't say no more; but dar we sat an' waited some time arter 'leven o'clock. Den at las' ole marse bell rings—loud, honey. And we jumped up and run up stairs, ole Jeremy wid the pitcher ob ice-water in his hands. Dar! Now, what anybody t'ink o' dat?'" exclaimed Het, breaking off suddenly in her story.

"Think of what? I wish you would go on, Hester."

"Yes, I gwine on, master. What anybody t'ink o' me, forgettin' like. An' I jest now 'members how dat misfortunate moonatic Miss Malady got in de house."

"How did she get in then? Go on, Hester."

"I'm a gwine on, young marse, 'deed I is. Why de way she got in was right t'rough de open kitchen door, which me an' ole Jeremy forgot to lock when we runned heller skeller up into ole marser's room."

"And you found your old master lying in this state?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald.

"Lor', no, Marse Gerald, nothing like it! Dis state, indeed. No, indeed! He was settin' up in his chair as poort as a parrot, a reading of a book, which he put it down and told me to make his punch, while Jeremy undressed him an' got him into bed. Well, Marse Colonel, me an' ole Jeremy stirred round right lively, we did, and put ole marse comfortable to bed, and then we gave him his Roman punch, and while he was a drinkin' of it, in walks dat crazy moonatic Malady, bole as brass. Ole Jeremy see her fus', and says he:

"'Lor' 'a' massy on all our souls!' says he. And den I look and I see her too, and I says:

"'How, on de face of de yeth, did you get inter de house, and what does you want anyhow?' And den ole marse catches his eye on her, and growls out:

"'Wot de debbel do you want in my pribate apartment, at dis time o' night, 'oman? Be off wid yourself!'

say ole marse, say he. And den I goes up to her, and says:

"'Yes. Wha' does yer mean, yer ondecent white trash, a truding ob yerself into a gem'an's bedroom, dis time o' night, and he in bed? Shame o' yerse'f!' says I. 'G' long out wid yer!' says I. But bress you, Marse Gerald, she put out her long arm and sweeped me out'n her way, as if I'd been so much chaff, widout a word spoke, and she marches up to ole marse and she takes somefin out of her bosom, she does, and she holes it close to his face, and she say, hoarse like:

"'Does yer know *this?*' And den she snatches it away, and hides it sudden in her bosom, and stood up proud like. Ole Marse he sot de glass o' punch down on de stand by de bedside, an' he fell to tremblin' and starin' at her till last wise he say, sca'ce speakin' 'bove his breaf:

"'Who are you? Where did you get dat?' say ole marse.

"'Ef yer will send dem dere black idiwuts out'n de room, I have somefin to say to you,' she say.

"Yes, Marse Gerald, dat jest wot she call we dem 'spectable, 'sponsible cullud parsons—idiwuts; but wot could you 'spect from sich a moonatic as Malady?"

"Never mind the mad woman. Tell me about my father, Hester," groaned Gerald Fitzgerald.

"Hi, honey, ain't I a tellin' of you as fast as I kin? Well, when she say dat, ole marse, he say:

"'Jeremy, you and Hester may go. I shall ring when I want you to show dis o'man out.'

"'Oh, marster, I say, ''sider your repitition as a gem'an,' I says.

"'Oh, marster, 'sider de safety of your life alone, 'long of a mad 'oman,' says ole Jeremy.

"''Sider your good character, ole marster,' I says, pitiful.

"But lor,' Marse Gerald, he wouldn't 'sider nuffin. He roared at us to begone, and we went; but we didn't go far. We stayed in de passage outside de door, case our old marse might be put in fear ob his life, and he so helpless he couldn't move hardly. Well, Marse Gerald, we hadn't been dere more'n ten minutes 'fore we heard old marse shout out:

"'IT IS FALSE AS ——!'

"And den no more; not a word; not a breaf; but presently dat crazy moonatic Malady come out and say to we dem:

"'Go in and look after your master.'

"And den we went in and found him jest like you see him now!" concluded Het, breaking into sobs and tears.

"And the woman, Magdala? Where did she go?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald.

"'Deed, I dunno, Marse. We was dat shocked and griebed, we didn't know what we was about. We gib de 'larm, dough, an' fotch all de servants inter de room; but woteber comed ob Malady, I dunno! I 'spects as how she went as she comed," said Het, sobbing.

Colonel Fitzgerald turned and looked at his father. No change, not the slightest, had taken place in his appearance. Clearly nothing could be done for him until the arrival of the doctor.

Colonel Fitzgerald rang the bell. Old Jeremy answered it.

"Have the premises searched for the woman Magdala. When she is found take her into the library and come and tell me. I must see her."

Old Jeremy bowed low, in silence, and left the room. Colonel Fitzgerald resumed his seat and his watch. Half an hour passed in silence only broken by the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece and the sighs of Hetty in the arm-chair. And then there came a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of Jeremy, who bowed low, as was his custom, and then said:

"We found Malady wandering in de groun's, Marse Colonel, an' we fotch her in, which she were willin' enough to come when we tell her as you want her, Marse Colonel."

"Ah! and you have put her in the library, as I directed you to do?"

"Yes, Marse Colonel," answered the old man.

"That is right. Go on. I will soon follow," said Colonel Fitzgerald. Then, turning to the old housekeeper, he charged her concerning his father.

"Watch your master with the greatest care, Hester. You must scarcely remove your eyes from him. If the

slightest change should occur in his appearance, you must come immediately down to the library and let me know. Do you understand?"

"Sartain, Marse Colonel, which I'll let yer know de minute any change *do* come ober: not as I tink any change will," replied Het, sadly shaking her head.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MANIAC'S WARNING.

GERALD FITZGERALD left his father's bed-chamber and went down into the library.

The room was dimly lighted by the single lamp that hung from the centre of the high ceiling.

Under this light, like some fabled Sibyl of old, stood the weird wanderer Magdala, her tall gaunt form clad in her soiled and tattered crimson stuff gown; her wild black hair streaming down her shoulders; her fine dark features lighted up by the fires of her fierce black eyes.

"You have invoked me, Gerald Fitzgerald, and I am here. Do you happen to know the danger of invoking a lost and ruined spirit?" she demanded, fixing her fiery eyes on his face.

"I hope it is not quite equal to raising the devil, my good woman," answered Colonel Fitzgerald, with the dry humour latent in his otherwise serious nature, and active even now when his mind was oppressed with gloom and anxiety.

"You called me. What do you want with me?" demanded Magdala, ignoring his words.

"First, pray sit down, my good woman," said the Colonel.

"I am not a good woman," snarled the wanderer.

"Please to sit down, then, Mistress Magdala."

"I am not Mistress Magdala or Mistress anybody else."

"Whoever your ladyship may be, I hope you will take a seat," said Gerald, handing her a chair. "You look fatigued."

"I am not fatigued. I will not sit down in your house. You sent for me. What do you want with me?"

"I will tell you. But first, you see, you compel me to commit a rudeness by seating myself in the presence of a lady who is standing up," said Fitzgerald, taking a chair.

"I am not a lady, and you must be either a knave or a fool to call me one."

"Madame, you are complimentary."

"I am not madame, and I am not complimentary."

"What shall I call you, then?" good-humouredly inquired Colonel Fitzgerald.

"Call me as others call me, plain Magdala."

"Then, Magdala," said Fitzgerald, very gravely, "I wish you to tell me what was the nature of your business with my father this evening? What was the token or memento you exhibited to him? And what was the communication that you made to him that seems to have been so startling or so shocking as to have brought on the dangerous attack of illness of which he may now be lying at the point of death?"

"Oh, you want to know all that, do you, Gerald Fitzgerald?"

"I wish to know it, and I will know it, Magdala!"

"Well, then, you won't."

"What do you say, woman?"

"I say you won't know it. There! I warned you of the danger of invoking an evil spirit! I warn you now of the deeper danger of questioning such a one!"

"Do you call yourself an evil spirit, poor woman?"

"At times I am possessed of one—'a fiend that drives me into wastes and solitary places,' that fires me to torment others and make them as miserable as I am myself!" cried the woman, bitterly.

"Was it such a fiend that sent you into a sick man's presence to-night?" sarcastically demanded Gerald Fitzgerald.

"Aye, it was, Colonel Fitzgerald. You speak in scornful incredulity, but you touch the truth. It was a

scourging fiend that hurried me to the bedside of Maurice Fitzgerald to-night to upbraid him."

"To upbraid him! Take care, Magdala. With what wrong under the sun do you fancy you upbraid Mr. Fitzgerald?" sternly demanded the son.

"*He knew*," fiercely retorted the woman.

"He knew! Why he scarcely knew you even by sight. You rave, Magdala! How should Mr. Fitzgerald have wronged you or any one? Maurice Fitzgerald, a gentleman of stainless honour!" said the colonel with dignity.

"Stainless honour!" echoed the woman, with a harsh laugh. "Oh, yes, I know all about that. I reckon I ought to, for I have heard it often enough in my life, that *never*

> "'Has falsehood or disgrace
> Been seen to soil Fitzgerald's plume,
> Or mantle on his face.'

Yes, I know all about that, and I know how true it is. I reckon 'stainless honour' went out of fashion among the Fitzgeralds about the time their plumed helmets gave place to felt hats!"

"You are a woman and a lunatic: in both characters, privileged to say and do a great deal; but be careful! Even womanhood and insanity shall not justify you in casting false aspersions on the character of Maurice Fitzgerald. And furthermore, Magdala, I must insist that you tell me all that passed in your interview with my stricken father. And what is the precise nature of the charge you dare to bring against him?"

"Look here, Colonel Gerald Fitzgerald! You may keep on insisting all night, but what if I keep on refusing? What can you do?"

"I will take all lawful means to compel you to tell."

"See here, Colonel Fitzgerald! 'You will take all lawful means to compel me,' will you? There *are* no means, lawful or unlawful, by which any human being can compel me to do anything that I have no mind to do! And more I tell you, Gerald Fitzgerald. If you, in this nineteenth century, possessed the power wielded by

your Tuscan ancestor, Otto Gherardino, and could have me put upon the rack and screwed limb from limb, you never should screw one word from my lips that I had once refused to utter."

"Why, in the demon, then, did you not refrain from speaking to my father?"

"Because the demon was *in me*. I told you that before. I am sorry I threw the old man into fits. I would not have done it, if I hadn't been possessed of the devil at the time. But he is gone now. He fled away at the sight of the beautiful stars, when I came out under the canopy of heaven. And, besides, he had done his errand with me, I suppose."

"And you will not tell me what you told my father?" said Colonel Fitzgerald, in a milder and more conciliatory tone, for it seemed to his just soul cruel, as well as useless to be angry with such an irresponsible maniac as this poor Magdala seemed to be.

"No, I will not tell you. I will never tell you while I am myself. If the devil were in me now, as he was some hours ago, I would tell you, if it was only to watch the effect: to see your ruddy complexion go pale as death; your strong limbs totter under you; to see you fall at my feet, struck dead, as your father is to-night! But I should take no pleasure in the sight, for the devil is not in me now."

"Is this raving madness?" exclaimed Colonel Fitzgerald, in amazement.

"Yes, we will call it raving madness, if you like. *But this is not!* Listen, Colonel Fitzgerald! You invoked me. But I did not obey your call for your pleasure alone. I came also because I have a warning to give you, that you will do well to heed!"

"A warning to give me, Magdala?" repeated the colonel, wondering.

"Ay! a warning, Gerald Fitzgerald. Listen, I am going to tell you a story. Do you hear?"

"Yes. Go on."

"I saw a man once, in the old country, with a frozen hand. It was thought to be dangerous to thaw it out in the usual way, lest it should mortify, and the man should lose his hand."

"Well?"

"So they took a white dove and cut it open alive, and put the man's hand in the living, beating, bleeding bosom of the dove and tied it up."

"Well?"

"The man's hand was safely thawed out, but the dove died a cruel death."

"Well?" inquired Fitzgerald for the third time.

"Your heart has been chilled—frozen! But I will not have my human dove suffer vivisection to warm and thaw it out."

"I do not understand you in the least."

"Yes, you do, or you will! Now be warned. For, by my life's long agony I swear, if but one white feather of my dove be stained, the proud 'plume' of Fitzgerald shall be dragged through the mire. I will tell your secret, not to a speechless and dying man, who can never reveal it—not to you who would never breathe it even to yourself: I would give it to the four winds of Heaven! And then the name of the Gherardini should be infamous in the four quarters of the globe!" exclaimed Magdala, with a wide sweep of her arm as she passed towards the door.

"Stay, mad woman! Tell me what you mean!" cried Colonel Fitzgerald, starting up to stop her.

But she whirled like a tornado out of the house before he could overtake her. She rushed through the front door, which Jeremy had just opened to admit Dr. Burton.

"Heaven and earth! who was that woman? What was the matter with her? She came at me like a battering-ram and nearly knocked me down," exclaimed the doctor, as he regained his balance and entered the house.

"She is a poor, wandering lunatic, who really ought not to be left at large. I am sorry she disturbed you, Doctor."

"Oh, never mind that. I am exceedingly sorry to hear of Mr. Fitzgerald's sudden attack. But it was to be expected, Colonel. I have been dreading it for some time, and I particularly warned every member of the family to guard him from any excitement."

"And your orders have been obeyed, Doctor, until

to-night, when the woman that you have just seen contrived to get into the house, and during one of her worst fits of frenzy burst into my father's bed-chamber. Heaven only knows what passed; the excitement has nearly killed him, I fear. But permit me to thank you for coming so very promptly. Will you go up to his room now?"

"Certainly," said Dr. Burton, as he pulled off his gloves, and gave them with his hat into the care of old Jeremy.

Then he followed Colonel Fitzgerald up stairs and into the sick chamber of the old gentleman.

Hetty, who was still watching beside her master, arose and gave way for the physician.

Dr. Burton made the usual medical examination, and then sent Jeremy down stairs to bring up his small medicine chest from his saddle-bags, for in that neighbourhood the physicians always rode with a small chemist's shop at their sides.

No more skilful physician could be found than Dr. Burton, of Wildeville. And he taxed his utmost skill in the case of his old friend and neighbour, Maurice Fitzgerald. Assisted by Gerald Fitzgerald, he watched and worked over his patient all night.

Thus they kept up the failing light of life in the dying man, but that was all.

At daylight the doctor took a cup of strong coffee that had been hastily prepared by old Hetty, and then leaving particular directions with Colonel Fitzgerald for the treatment of the patient and promising to return in the afternoon, he left the Summit to make his usual round of professional visits in the neighbourhood.

Gerald Fitzgerald sent off messengers to Hill Top Hall and to Greenwood to apprise his friends and relatives of the dangerous illness of his father, and then he returned to his watch by the bedside.

It was a long and weary watch. Hour after hour passed without the slightest change coming over the appearance of the sick man.

Early in the afternoon the doctor returned and resumed his indefatigable efforts for the relief of the sufferer, but without effect. Maurice Fitzgerald lay like a

dead man, as he had lain since the beginning of this last illness.

Toward evening the messengers returned from Hill Top Hall and Greenwood, with the regrets and condolences of the two families. Miss Maxima Rowley sent word that she would hasten to the bedside of her esteemed relative, Mr. Fitzgerald, if she were not unfortunately confined to her chair by an acute attack of rheumatism. Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald and Miss Sue Greenleaf sent word offering their services in any way in which they might be acceptable at this crisis.

"Some lady ought to share with you the care of this invalid, Colonel. Your excellent old Hetty is faithful and devoted, but not quite so intelligent as might be desired," said the doctor.

"I will send for one of the ladies from Greenwood at once," said Gerald Fitzgerald. And he immediately sat down and wrote a note thanking the two Greenwood sisters for their kind offer, and inviting either or both to come and take the reins of government at the Summit. He sent this note off by Peter the same evening.

The unwearied son watched all this second night by the side of his suffering father, while the doctor slept in the next room, so as to be at hand in case of need.

It was too late this evening to expect any of the Greenwood ladies; but Colonel Fitzgerald felt sure that one or both would arrive early in the morning.

He was quite right. Just before midnight his messenger returned with a note from Miss Sue Greenleaf, saying that her sister was engaged to attend a meeting of the Dorcas Society, of which she was president, and which was to be held at the church next day; but that she herself, Miss Sue, with a young companion, would hasten to the Summit in the morning. The second night's watch was even more dreary and hopeless than the first had been. Maurice Fitzgerald lay without any sign of life except the low faint pulse, that could scarcely be detected even by feeling. The third morning's sun looking into the room of death, found him in the same condition. Dr. Burton made his appearance soon after sunrise, examined his patient, and questioned the latter as to how the night had passed. But the

watcher had nothing to tell the physician, beyond the fact that there had been no change whatever. The doctor sat by the bed for an hour, and then, after partaking of a slight breakfast, and promising a speedy return, he set out on a round of visits to his patients. At ten o'clock, Miss Sue Greenleaf arrived, attended by Gertrude Haddon. Miss Sue considered it only proper that a maiden lady, like herself should take a female companion, when going to stay at a single gentleman's house.

Colonel Fitzgerald being told of her arrival, gave up his post as watcher to Aunt Hetty, and went down to receive Miss Greenleaf, not expecting to see any one else. He found the elder and the younger lady seated in the parlour.

"My dear Miss Greenleaf," he said, offering his hand to the stately lady, "it is very kind of you to come to me in my extremity."

"Why, not at all, Colonel Fitzgerald! I am so shocked and grieved at what has happened, that it is a sort of comfort to me to come and do all I can," replied Miss Greenleaf, sincerely.

"You are very good to say so," answered Gerald Fitzgerald, glancing at the slight black-robed figure by her side, whom he did not immediately recognize as Gertrude.

"Oh, and I have taken the liberty to bring my young friend, Miss Haddon, with me. She is, I assure you, a very tender nurse," said Miss Sue, apologetically.

"Miss Haddon is most welcome. I thank you, madame, very much for bringing her," said Fitzgerald, cordially taking the young girl's hand and quite involuntarily pressing it.

"If I could only be of any use," murmured Gertrude, half-frightened at the sound of her own voice, yet longing, oh, how ardently, to serve her hero in some way.

"You will be of great use, I am very sure," replied Gerald Fitzgerald.

"And, now, Colonel, if you will only let one of your women-servants show us to some room where we can take off our bonnets, I shall be ready to relieve your watch by the sick bed," said Miss Sue.

"Thanks, Miss Greenleaf," replied the colonel, ringing the bell. Peter put his head in at the door.

"Send Meta here," said his master.

The man bowed and disappeared, but was soon succeeded by a pretty mulatto girl, who courtesied and stood waiting.

"Meta, my girl, show these ladies to the apartments lately occupied by Miss Fitzgerald, and wait their orders," said Gerald, as he arose.

The girl courtesied and led the way up stairs, followed by Miss Greenleaf and Gertrude Haddon.

Colonel Fitzgerald returned to resume his watch by his father's sick-bed.

"No change yet, Hester?" he sighed, as he sank down into the chair she had vacated for him.

"No change yet, Marse Gerald," she replied, with an answering moan.

"Go down and get some refreshments for the ladies, Hester. They will need something after their long ride. I will ring if I should want you."

The old housekeeper obeyed in silence and left her master alone with the dying man. He took the cold hand and felt the faint pulse. It was certainly beating faster, he thought. He looked in the pallid face.

Just then Maurice Fitzgerald stirred and opened his eyes.

A thrill of joy shot through the frame of the son.

"My father! My dear father! Oh, thank Heaven that I meet your eyes once more!" he fervently exclaimed.

The old man attempted to raise his hand, but it fell helplessly by his side. Then his lips moved, but only inaudible sounds came from them. Gerald Fitzgerald bent down his ear to the moving lips.

"What—is—all—this?" they muttered, with difficulty.

"You have been ill, dear father, but you are better now, thank Heaven."

A spasm of perplexity and pain passed over the pallid face, as he whispered:

"I remember—I remember now."

Gerald Fitzgerald arose and got the powerful stimulant that had been left by the doctor, poured out half a wine-glassful of the mixture, and brought it to the bedside.

He put his strong arm under his father's head, raised it, and placed the glass to the patient's lips. Maurice Fitzgerald swallowed the cordial slowly and with difficulty. When the last drop was drained, Gerald lowered his father's head on the pillow, and replaced the glass on the stand from which he had taken it.

When he returned to the bedside he saw the same wistful, earnest look in the dying eyes, the same tremulous motion of the dying lips, from which no audible sounds proceeded.

Again he bent his ear to catch, if possible, the expiring accents. The pallid lips quivered and gasped:

"Gerald—marry—your cousin—at once—it is necessary."

He pressed his father's hand in silence and listened further.

"The woman—Magdala—knows all."

Gerald Fitzgerald's heart stood still with suspense. The woman Magdala knows all? What did the mad woman know? What terrible, damning secret, sufficient to crush the haughty house of Fitzgerald, did the poor wanderer Magdala know? Gerald Fitzgerald could not even conjecture. Yet, the father spoke as with the "foregone conclusion" that the son knew everything. He knew nothing; and yet dreaded to excite his father by making inquiries.

But the pallid lips were moving again.

"Magdala knows all; all, Gerald."

Colonel Fitzgerald held his breath, and listened further.

"*And it is true!* Heaven forgive me, it is true!"

"What is true, dear father? And what does Magdala know?" hoarsely inquired Gerald Fitzgerald, almost overcome by grief and horror, yet forcibly controlling his emotions. The fingers of the dying man closed convulsively on the hand of his son.

"Listen!" he murmured, faintly. "Listen—I will tell you all."

CHAPTER XXIX.

FLED!

"LISTEN," came in fainter murmurs from the lips of the dying man.

Gerald Fitzgerald bent down his ear and strained his attention to catch the expiring sounds.

But the lips moved no more; the last word was spoken; the last breath was drawn; Maurice Fitzgerald had dropped into that last delicious sleep from which the waking will be in another world.

Yet his son listened, knowing his attention to be in vain—listened in that mute awe which precedes grief, even in the heaviest bereavements, and holds the spirit motionless, spellbound, in the presence of death.

At last, still holding the dead hand, he sank upon his knees by the bedside and prayed silently.

Then he arose and with reverential tenderness, closed the sightless eyes and the mute lips, and drew the sheet over the lifeless face. Finally, he closed the window-shutters, and left the chamber of death.

In the hall outside he met Miss Greenleaf, who had just left her room, attended by Gertrude.

"We are quite ready to relieve you, Colonel Fitzgerald, and to take our places beside Mr. Fitzgerald," said Miss Sue, cheerfully.

"My father has passed beyond our charge, my dear Miss Greenleaf. I thank you earnestly all the same, however," gravely replied the bereaved son.

"You do not mean to say—" exclaimed Miss Sue, and there she stopped, appalled.

"My father is gone, Miss Greenleaf. He passed away scarcely an hour ago."

"I am deeply shocked. I am profoundly grieved," said Miss Sue, as the tears rushed to her eyes.

"The will of Heaven be done," muttered Gerald Fitzgerald, in a choking voice.

"Go to your room and lie down, dear Colonel. You should not be troubled with details just now. Leave all to me for this one day, and take your rest. I will see all done that is necessary, and I will send off a messenger immediately for my brother," said Miss Sue, with thoughtful kindness.

"I thank you, Miss Greenleaf. I will retire for a short time. Pray do as you suggest," replied Gerald Fitzgerald, pressing her hand and then relinquishing it, as he turned away and entered his own room, and dressed as he was, threw himself down, exhausted, upon his bed.

Not to sleep! Sorrow for the sudden death of his father, so far as he could realize it even now, and pain and perplexity in regard to that unrevealed, fatal secret which old Maurice Fitzgerald had died in trying to utter, kept his mind wrought up to a state of excitement entirely incompatible with sleep. The sudden death of his father was an accomplished fact, leaving behind it a dull, still, deep-seated pain, with a presentiment that it would soon awaken and realize itself in poignant sorrow. But the mystery of the untold secret in which the honour of the high Fitzgerald was at stake—this was a living, active, irritant trouble. It had not died with Maurice Fitzgerald. It lived in the keeping of a wandering mad woman, and might, in any wayward mood, (which she described as being the possession of a malignant demon,) be suddenly disclosed to the world!

And what was this mystery?

That it was a most degrading secret was certain from the words of her who had spoken of it, without revealing it, and of *him* who had died in the effort to utter it.

It might also involve some case of deep injustice—some duty of heroic restitution.

At all events, it was a mystery which it was now the duty of Gerald Fitzgerald to investigate and reveal.

To do this, he must hunt out and interrogate the mad woman, Magdala. She had said that "while possessed of a devil" she was capable of revealing the secret. In other and more rational words, when she was in the *humour* to communicate, she might do so.

Thinking of this, Colonel Fitzgerald resolved to find her out.

Meanwhile Miss Sue Greenleaf went down stairs and ordered Jeremy, the body-servant of the late Mr. Maurice Fitzgerald, to call the household together in the long dining-room, as she had something to announce to them.

The old man, without the least suspicion of the loss that had befallen them, bowed deeply, and withdrew to deliver his message.

Miss Sue called Gertrude to follow her, and went into the long dining-room, and took her seat at the head of the table and sat with her elbow resting on the shining-mahogany and her head bowed upon her hand.

Gertrude sat silently beside her.

The door opened and all the household servants filed in, bowed, and ranged themselves in a line at the foot of the table, and waited for Miss Greenleaf to speak.

Miss Sue then arose and said:

"My good friends, you all know how very ill your dear master has been. It will not surprise you, therefore, however it may grieve you, to learn that—"

Here Miss Sue was interrupted by loud cries, groans and wails of the assembled men, women, children, who anticipated her fatal communication by breaking into wild exclamations of—

"Ole marster is dead! Oh, oh, oh! ole marster is dead! Dead and gone—dead and gone! Nebber see ole marster no more! Nebber no more—nebber no more!"

The tumult was so great as to drown the voice of Miss Greenleaf, who ceased to speak while these affectionate, untutored children of nature gave way to the wildest exhibitions of sorrow and despair, wringing their hands, swinging their bodies to and fro, shrieking, crying, weeping, sobbing and continuing their weird refrain:

"Ole marse is dead! Dead and gone—dead and gone! Nebber see ole marse no more! Nebber no more—nebber no more!"

It was more like the inarticulate, unreasoning lamentations sometimes seen and heard among the brute creation than the mourning of human beings.

Gertrude looked on in an agony of sympathy and compassion as long as she could bear, and then bent her lips to Miss Greenleaf's ear and whispered:

"Oh, Miss Sue! speak some comfort to the poor souls. Tell them *it is not so!*"

"What 'is not so,' my child? What can I tell them? Their master *is* dead and gone. I cannot tell them *that* is not so," answered Miss Greenleaf in a low whisper.

"He is *gone*, but he is not dead. Miss Sue, *you* know better than that. Tell *them*. Teach *them*."

"I cannot, my dear. It is a great mystery. I do not understand it myself. I am sure *they* could not be made to understand it."

"Oh, yes, they could. Their *love* would help them to do so," murmured Gertrude.

Then, taken out of herself by her great pity, carried beyond bashfulness, timidity, and all self-consciousness, she went down among the wailing negroes, mingled with them, laid her hands on such as she knew, and called them by name as she spoke to them:

"Do not weep so, Aunt Hetty. Your dear old master is not really dead. He is more alive than he ever was before! As you are a Christian woman, you *know* this; and you must take it to your heart and *feel* it too, and get the comfort of it. Jeremy, listen to me. There is no death. Your good old master is more alive than you are at this moment. And ever so much more free than I am, or any of us ever can be, until we are free of the body for evermore. Oh, dear friends, in all the Lord's lovely universe, there is no death, nor any possibility of death; but change to good and to better and better forever. Let me tell you, Leah," she said, addressing the aged nurse of the late master—"you are over eighty years old, and have served a long, long time in the flesh. You have a daughter and grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the far Southwest, and you often want to go to them, but cannot. Now, if you were free, as your master is to-day, you would go to them at once! Not to their visible presence; but nearer still to them—into their very souls. Oh, if I could only make you feel it all," she said, almost sinking in her sense of inefficiency and weakness. Then—using such homely similes as the butterfly in the chrysalis, the bird

in the shell—she tried to inspire them with the perception of the truth of the continuance and ascension of life after apparent death, as she had received that truth from the teachings of Gabriel Haddon, and from the intuitions of the Spirit.

And whether it was from the influence of her touch, or her voice, or her words, we know not; but we know that she calmed the wild tumult before she came to herself.

Then as the coloured people quietly left the room, she came around and rejoined Miss Sue Greenleaf.

"My dear child, you have quieted them, but I don't believe they understood a word you said. I'm not even sure that *I* did," said Miss Greenleaf.

"Oh, Miss Sue, it is not always by understanding, it is by perception we get the truth. Perhaps they did not understand, but they perceived. *I* do not understand, but I perceive," murmured Gertrude, reverentially.

"All this is a great deal too metaphysical for me, my dear. But I must send off a messenger for Royal to come and attend to things. Colonel Fitzgerald must not be disturbed by details to-day," said Miss Sue, as she passed out into the hall, and sent Jeremy down to the stable with orders to mount and carry the tidings of the death of Maurice Fitzgerald to Greenwood, and to request Mr. Royal Greenleaf to come immediately to the Summit to take direction of affairs.

Then Miss Greenleaf busied herself and her young companion with such preparations for the funeral as came immediately under her feminine jurisdiction.

Royal Greenleaf reached the Summit early in the afternoon. Colonel Fitzgerald being apprised of his arrival came down to receive him.

"This is very sudden, Gerald, very sudden, indeed. I feel for you, my boy; I do, indeed. I remember when I lost my own father, big man as I was, I—I—I—"

Here honest Royal Greenleaf's voice quite broke down, and he finished by silently wringing the hand of his friend and turning away.

"Sit down, Royal, and let me offer you some refreshments after your long ride," said Colonel Fitzgerald, by way of putting an end to condolences.

"No, no, no; I couldn't touch anything now, thank you. I came here to serve you. Tell me how I can best do it. I am absolutely at your orders. You have only to command me," said Royal Greenleaf, earnestly.

"I thank you from my heart," replied Gerald Fitzgerald, taking and pressing the hand of his friendly neighbour.

Then the two gentlemen drew their chairs together to discuss the business that brought them into company. Gerald Fitzgerald gave his instructions, and Royal took out note-book and pencil, and jotted them down.

When Mr. Greenleaf had received the last direction and recorded it, and replaced his pencil and note-book in his pocket, and was in the act of rising to take leave, Colonel Fitzgerald stopped him by suddenly inquiring:

"Royal, do you know anything about a certain, poor, mad woman who roams around the country under the name of—Magdala, or where she is to be found?"

"I know a very *un*certain mad woman of that name, but I haven't the least idea in the world where she is to be found," replied Mr. Greenleaf.

"Can you tell me anything at all about her? Who she is? Where she came from? What turned her brain?"

"Is it possible you don't know anything about Magdala?"

"You know that I have been an absentee from home for nearly the whole of the last fifteen years—four years at West Point, three in Florida, three in Mexico, and five on the Western plains."

"That is so, certainly. Of course, you could know nothing about Magdala. And to tell the truth, we know very little. She is the one mystery of our prosaic neighbourhood."

"Did my father know her well?"

"I don't think he knew her at all. I never saw her at the Summit or near it in my life. She haunted the valleys, not the mountains. Favours Greenwood, Forest Lodge, and the Cave House with her visits, but has never been seen at Hill Top Hall or Summit Manor House, I believe."

Colonel Fitzgerald could have set his neighbour right

as to the mad woman's visits to the Summit Manor; but forbearing to do so, he inquired:

"Will you tell me all that you *do* know about this singular woman?"

"Yes, certainly; but that is little enough. Neither I nor any one else about here seem to know anything about her beyond this—that in the great flood of fifteen years ago she was rescued from the water in a half-drowned condition. Whether she was mad before, or whether the perils and sufferings of that awful night drove her mad, no one knows, or ever can know, I do suppose; for, though she was brought to life again, she was never brought to reason. Many who saw the most of her about that time declare their opinion that on that terrible night she lost her mind, her memory, and even her own identity. Certain it is that she has never been able to give the least account of herself, or the slightest clue to her history. She could not even tell her own name."

"How came she then to be called Magdala?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald.

"Oh! I have heard that in the pocket of her dress, when she was picked up, was found an empty pocket-book, on the silver clasp of which was engraved the word —MAGDALA; but whether that word was a name, or, if it was a name whether it was hers, no one ever knew; for when she herself was questioned on the subject, she only shook her head and said she could not tell. However, that was the way in which she came to be called Magdala. But why are *you* so suddenly interested in this poor, mad woman, if it is a fair question, Gerald?" gravely demanded Royal Greenleaf.

"I will tell you at some future time, neighbour, not now," answered Colonel Fitzgerald.

While they spoke together in the parlour, the house was full of quiet bustle, if such a phrase be admissible. People were moving about in silence, or speaking together in whispers, as they busied themselves in preparing to pay the last honours to the remains of the departed master.

As Colonel Fitzgerald uttered his last words, Gertrude Haddon entered from the conservatory with her arms full of white flowers, with which she glided softly across

the parlour, merely bowing to Royal Greenleaf as she passed, and took them into an inner room.

"There goes my future wife—if she will have me," exclaimed the bachelor master of Greenwood, when he had returned her bow.

Gerald Fitzgerald gave a scarcely perceptible start and looked at his visitor intently.

Royal Greenleaf, unconscious of his host's fixed regards, went on speaking recklessly.

"Jehosaphat, King of Jerusalem, what a lovely girl this new heroine of my sister's, is, to be sure! And how amazingly like the Fitzgeralds she is. Don't you think so?"

"I—have not noticed any such likeness," answered the colonel.

"Well, you look at her attentively the next time you meet her and you will see it at once."

"I should not like to be so rude," said Gerald Fitzgerald, somewhat coldly.

"Oh, I don't mean *that!* I don't mean that you are to stare at her, but look at her well and you will perceive her wonderful likeness to the beautiful Fitzgerald women."

"She is certainly not the least like Geraldine or Patricia," said Colonel Fitzgerald, emphatically.

"Oh, I don't mean these younger ones. No, she is not like them. Nor do I think—begging their ladyships' pardons—that their beauty is to be compared to the beauty of their predecessors—your lovely aunts, Gerald."

"Ah! I do not remember my father's sisters, Royal."

"No, they both died before reaching the age of twenty-five. Helena went first, then Camilla. This girl is the living image of Helena."

"It is an accidental likeness, then, or an imaginary one. I never heard any one speak of it before," said Colonel Fitzgerald, as if he would have changed the conversation.

But Royal Greenleaf could talk of nothing else.

"*I* never noticed the likeness, striking as it certainly is, until the girl was brought to Greenwood—for indeed I had seen very little of her previous to that day."

"Yet she was brought up at Haddon's Ferry, and you must have crossed the river at that point many times every year," said Colonel Fitzgerald, gravely.

"I know it, and yet I scarcely ever saw that lovely girl, and *never* near enough to notice her. I suppose her old grandfather, or rather guardian, Gabriel Haddon, kept her carefully out of the way of such a wild bachelor as I am reported to be."

"I should think that quite likely," dryly observed Colonel Fitzgerald.

"But I will tell you one thing, Gerald. If I *had* seen this sweet girl earlier, I should not be a bachelor at this hour!" exclaimed Royal Greenleaf, nodding archly.

"That is, if the young lady could have been persuaded to accept you as a husband," said Colonel Fitzgerald, quietly.

"Of course, I meant that."

"But she is as yet a mere child."

"Oh, she is young, sure enough; but that is a fault which must daily mend. And one thing is as certain as fate—Miss Haddon shall be the mistress of Greenwood within three months of this date, if she will consent to take Royal Greenleaf 'for better, for worse!'" exclaimed Gertrude's admirer, rising and clapping his broad-brimmed straw hat upon his head with an emphatic thump.

Colonel Fitzgerald bowed and waved his hand, with, perhaps, some little latent irony.

"And now, if I am to see these people to-day and get back here by sunset, I really must be off," continued Mr. Greenleaf, drawing on his gloves.

"*Do* allow me to offer you some refreshments before you go?" urged Colonel Fitzgerald.

"Why, man alive, where should I put it, if you were to give it to me? I just got up from a full meal, when I jumped upon my horse to ride here. No, I thank you. I could not eat another morsel, or drink another drop. Good-day for the present," said Mr. Greenleaf, holding out his hand.

"Good-day, then. Pray accept my hearty thanks for kind services to-day," said Colonel Fitzgerald, warmly shaking the hand of his eccentric neighbour.

Royal Greenleaf hurried from the house, and a few minutes later his horse's hoofs were heard clattering away from the yard.

The new master of the manor remained in the parlour, walking up and down the floor until his attention was called by a low voice.

"Colonel Fitzgerald!"

He turned suddenly, to see Gertrude standing within the room. She had entered so softly that he had not perceived her presence until she spoke.

"Well, my child, what is it?" he inquired, bending his eyes kindly upon the little sweet face.

"Miss Greenleaf has sent me to ask if you will not come into the little breakfast parlour and take a cup of tea with us."

"Thanks, dear child—yes. Miss Greenleaf is very kind and thoughtful," he answered, as he stepped forward, opened the communicating door, and drew Gertrude's arm within his own to lead her into the breakfast-room.

Miss Sue Greenleaf was presiding at a small table, on which was arranged an elegant little tea-service, and many tempting delicacies.

"I am glad you have been induced to join us, Colonel Fitzgerald. You must not really neglect your health," said Miss Sue.

Colonel Fitzgerald bowed silently, placed his young companion in her chair at the table, and seated himself opposite to her, where he could, without rudeness or offence, quietly study the meek beauty of her face.

"No, Royal is mistaken. This dear child is not like the queenly Fitzgerald women; her beauty is less earthly, more divine. But how *could* that honest brute, my cousin Royal, presume to think himself worthy to possess so lovely a girl as this for his wife? I hope he will not really ever think seriously of troubling her with such a suit!" said Colonel Fitzgerald to himself, as he sat and furtively studied her face.

Miss Sue Greenleaf thought him very absent-minded, and observed that he took a long time to drink a single cup of tea; but she considered that he had much to occupy his thoughts, and so, when he had finished one

cup and refused another, she suffered him to rise and leave the table without remonstrance.

"I wonder who she really is?" thought Gerald Fitzgerald, as he returned to the front parlour. "A waif of the Wilde. The adopted child of the old ferry-man. That is all we know of her."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HEIR OF SUMMIT MANOR.

THREE days later, amid a vast concourse of friends, neighbours, and relatives, the mortal remains of Maurice Fitzgerald were laid in the family vault, under the little chapel on Summit Manor.

After the last solemn services were over the great crowd dispersed and returned to their several homes, leaving only a few of the nearest relations and most intimate friends of the family, who were invited to remain and be present at the reading of the last will and testament of the late Maurice Fitzgerald of Summit Manor.

Among those who accepted the invitation and remained were the Greenleafs, of Greenwood, represented by Mr. Royal and Miss Sue Greenleaf; Mrs. Doy and Miss Patricia Fitzgerald and Mr. Benjamin Bowers; the Fitzgeralds, of Forest Lodge, and half a dozen other manors, all represented by Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald, and the Rowleys, of the Cave House, by Miss Horatia Rowley only.

The reading of the will was appointed to be performed in the middle of the afternoon in the long dining-room of the manor-house; and there at the proper hour were assembled all persons supposed to be interested in the matter, including the household servants and many of the field labourers.

The attorney of the testator, the holder of the will,

Mr. Keyworth, of Wildeville, sat at the head of the long dining-table, with a black Japan box before him. Nearest relatives and dearest friends filled the seats down each side and at the bottom of the board.

Gerald and Geraldine Fitzgerald found themselves, by accident or Providence, seated side by side on the right hand of the attorney. This was the first occasion on which they had met since their quarrel.

And now, only necessity brought them together.

Colonel Fitzgerald acknowledged the presence of his beautiful betrothed only by a grave bow, which she returned with a slight inclination of her stately head, just as they took their places at the table. That was all. No word passed between them. He sat in perfect silence, his lips compressed beneath his dark mustache, and his eyes fixed upon the table. She reclined back in her chair, and slowly fanned herself with the black crape fan of her deep mourning suit.

The reading of the will was a short and simple affair. Summit Manor being already an entailed estate, fell of itself into the possession of Gerald Fitzgerald, as the only son and heir of his father, the late proprietor. A few legacies were left to friends, relatives, and dependants, and then all real estate, not entailed, and all the personal property of the testator, was bequeathed to his only son, Gerald, residuary legatee and sole executor of the will.

"And now," said Mr. Keyworth, as he rolled up the document, returned it into its Japan case, and handed it over to Colonel Fitzgerald, "I have to congratulate you, sir, upon your succession to a large and entirely unencumbered estate. It is very seldom that such a thing occurs. I have never before, in my long legal practice, met with a case in which so vast an estate was passed from father to son entirely free of all liabilities——"

Here the speaker was interrupted by a loud, crackling, derisive laugh.

All turned in the direction of the open window, whence the sound proceeded. A wild face, with piercing black eyes and streaming black hair, was seen suddenly to drop down from the outside to the ground, and then all was silent.

"It is that unhappy creature Magdala, of whom we were just speaking, Gerald," said Royal Greenleaf, resuming his attitude of attention to the lawyer. "Do not mind her—go on, Mr. Keyworth."

"I was saying that I had never before known so vast an estate as the Summit Manor to pass from father to son so entirely free from encumbrance as this is. Even the legacies, you will observe, Colonel Fitzgerald, are to be paid out of the idle capital remaining in the Wildeville Bank to the account of the late Maurice Fitzgerald. But it was always the pride of my late honoured client to keep the great manor entirely free from all liabilities."

"I wish I could say the same of Greenwood and its owner, Mr. Keyworth," said honest Royal Greenwood.

"Hush, uncle! You have a large unencumbered property in Paradise, laid up there by your good deeds to widows, orphans, poor cousins, and other forlornities—deeds that you could not have done and left your little farm of Greenwood entirely free from burden," whispered Patricia Fitzgerald.

The attorney now drew from his breast-pocket two letters, saying:

"These were placed in my hands about ten days ago, by my late esteemed client, who sent for me and gave them into my keeping, to be delivered to the parties to which they are addressed, in case of just such circumstances as now exist. The letters will explain themselves," he added, as he delivered them both into the hands of the heir.

"Are you acquainted with their contents, Mr. Keyworth?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald, as he looked at the superscription of the envelope, and seeing that one was addressed to his cousin, passed it silently over to her.

"Yes, Colonel, I know their contents. In fact, I wrote the letters with my own hand to the dictation of the late Mr. Fitzgerald. The letters may be called both private and public as to their nature; and it is, of course, optional with you to read them aloud or in silence," said Mr. Keyworth.

"If my good friends will give me leave I will look over my father's letter before reading it aloud," said

Colonel Fitzgerald, with a courteous glance around the table.

Royal Greenleaf, in the name of the company, begged him not to stand on ceremony, but to proceed.

Gerald Fitzgerald bowed, broke the seal of his letter, and began to read with a perplexed and troubled brow, which grew more troubled and perplexed as he went on.

Geraldine held her letter unopened in her hand, and her pale, proud face seemed prouder and paler than ever.

The company looked on, and waited in anxiety and suspense.

Gerald Fitzgerald finished the reading, at length, folded the letter, placed it in his breast-pocket, and sat for a moment in troubled silence.

His friends looked on with feelings of disappointment, too plainly betrayed by their faces.

At length, after some reflection, Colonel Fitzgerald looked up and said:

"My friends, this letter from my father speaks to me now like a voice from beyond the grave. I am called to act upon its counsel; but such action requires consideration and—the co-operation of another. Under these circumstances, I must beg that you will allow me time for reflection before I shall make the subject of this posthumous communication public."

"Oh, certainly, certainly, take your own time, Gerald," said Royal Greenleaf, heartily, though looking the disappointment he could not all conceal.

"Take a year! Take a lifetime, my dear boy! In fact, take forever if you like. If you don't like to make known the contents of that letter to us, you need never do it. The lawyer said it was optional with you to do it, or not to do it!" pompously exclaimed Ben Bowers, who did not care one penny what was contained in the mysterious letter so that it was not a codicil revoking the legacy of a thousand dollars left him by the will of the late Maurice Fitzgerald, which had just gladdened the heart of the poor impecunious loafer.

"Certainly, Colonel Fitzgerald has a right to keep his own secrets, if he pleases to do so," said Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald.

"There is, I assure you, my dear lady, some counsel

that requires consideration on the part of myself, and co-operation on the part of another," said Gerald Fitzgerald, with a gentle smile.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, as my business here is concluded for the present, with Colonel Fitzgerald's permission, I will bid you good-afternoon," said the lawyer, rising, and taking up his green bag.

"You will do nothing of the sort, Mr. Keyworth. You will remain and dine with us," said Colonel Fitzgerald, heartily.

The attorney lifted his gray eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and bowed assent.

"Geraldine, my love, are you not going to read your letter?" inquired Mrs. Doy, with interest.

"No, madame. I shall reserve it for the present," said Miss Fitzgerald, in a low tone, and with a face as white as marble.

"My dear, you are not well. What is the matter with you?" anxiously demanded Mrs. Doy.

"Nothing is the matter with me. I am in robust health. I always was so; but now I am tired to death of sitting here so long. Since the business that brought us together has been finished, I think we had better adjourn to the drawing-room," answered Geraldine, speaking in a low tone that all her self-command could not make steady.

And, so saying, she arose from the table and stood with her hands resting on the back of her chair.

Colonel Fitzgerald, arose, bowed, and silently offered his arm to lead her out.

As silently she bent her head, and slipped her hand within his elbow, but held him back until the whole company had preceded them out of the room. Then she allowed him to lead her after them.

The pair went on in perfect silence until all the company had disappeared within the drawing-room and *they* found themselves at the door of the library, which happened to be vacant at the time.

Then Geraldine stopped and held him back, raised her dark eyes to his, and with a gesture at once imperious and beseeching, pointed to the empty library.

He led her in, released her arm, and stood silently before her, waiting her pleasure.

How grandly beautiful she looked, standing in the midst of the crimson library, where the last rays of the setting sun, streaming through the stained glass of the Gothic window, falling behind her, surrounded her queenly form in a halo of rainbow glory—with her hands clasped together, and hanging down before her upon her black mourning-dress, with her stately head bent till all its richness of purple black locks fell around the warm, glowing, eloquent face. That face had been pale as marble a few moments before, but now it was suffused with lovely flushes.

He looked at her with adoration, with worship, with expectancy.

The letter that she held unconsciously between her clasped hands dropped unheeded to her feet.

He stooped and picked it up and gave it to her.

She slipped it mechanically into her pocket, and then held out both her hands to him, exclaiming in low, impassioned, vibrating tones:

"Gerald, I have wronged you—bitterly. I mourn for it—oh! how deeply. Pardon me, Gerald. I *implore* you to pardon me, for I *do* love you—and honour you—and believe in you utterly! I have—ever since I was a little child."

"I see the little child of five summers now, with her beautiful, dark, trusting eyes," murmured Gerald Fitzgerald, tenderly, as his hands closed on hers.

"I was wild and mad to have uttered such false and wicked words against you—you, my beloved, my honoured—"

"They are dead and buried and forgotten, as if they had never been spoken," murmured Fitzgerald, drawing her to his heart in a close embrace.

"Oh, you make me very happy! I bless—I bless your divine forgiveness, Gerald!" she sighed, and overcome by the strong emotion of her feelings, she sank, half fainting, into the nearest chair.

He was at her side in an instant, kneeling at her feet, holding her hands, breathing words of fondest, truest love into her ears.

"Oh, Gerald, I fear—I fear *myself*—my almost insane moods, when another spirit, not my own, seems to possess me! Oh, Gerald, can you always forgive—no, pardon? We forgive faults, but pardon sins. Can you always pardon your wretched, ill-tempered Geraldine, because, ill as she is, she loves you, she honours you, and she always has and always will? Can you do that, oh, Gerald?" she faintly implored.

"I can forgive my own dear Geraldine for the sake of her great love, for her great beauty, and above all, for that I myself do so much need forgiveness," said Fitzgerald, kissing the fair hands that he still held while kneeling by her side.

"Give me back my little betrothal ring, then," she murmured through happy tears.

"See where I have kept it since it left your finger," he answered, detaching a slender watchguard from his neck, and drawing it from his bosom until he drew out the little engagement ring from its hiding-place. "Next my heart," he added, as he replaced it on her finger.

"Oh, Gerald! May Heaven grant that I may ever be able to make you as happy as you have made me this evening. But my temper—oh, my diabolical temper!" she exclaimed, with half a sigh and half a smile.

"And now, love," said Fitzgerald, rising and seating himself by her side, "shall I read to you my father's posthumous letter, which has so awakened the curiosity of our friends in the drawing-room?"

"Yes; do read it to me, and then read mine. I wonder what they are both about?"

"We shall soon see," said Gerald Fitzgerald, very gravely, as he unfolded the letter and read.

CHAPTER XXXI.

STORMY HEARTS.

THE posthumous letter of Maurice Fitzgerald to his son was as follows:

IN MY SICK CHAMBER, SUMMIT MANOR HOUSE,
July 22nd, 18—.

MY GOOD SON GERALD:—Daily increasing infirmities warn me that my days are numbered on this earth. My physician's silence, at his faintly-expressed encouragement, when I speak to him on this subject, assures me that his secret opinion corroborates my judgment.

Now, then, lest I should pass away before we meet again, or even before you make your promised bride your own, I wish to write this letter to tell you what to do in such a case.

If, therefore, I should be suddenly called hence, before your marriage with your cousin Geraldine is accomplished, I both desire and command, if my desires have any persuasion, or my commands any authority, that your marriage may not be delayed by my departure, but that it may take place as soon after my mortal remains are placed in the earth as shall be practicable. The ceremony may be as plain and private as you please; but it must be performed immediately, as you value your own interests and my blessing. I shall leave this letter with Mr. Keyworth, to be delivered in case of necessity. And now, that the Lord may save and bless both you and yours, here and hereafter, is the daily frevent prayer of

Your affectionate father,

MAURICE OTHO FITZGERALD.

"What say you, my beloved Geraldine, shall my father's and your guardian's wishes be carried out? I need not tell you that they are my own most earnest desires," said Gerald Fitzgerald, as he folded his letter, and returned it to his pocket.

"Let me read my own letter, dear Gerald," she answered, as she broke the seal and drew the paper from the envelope.

"Why, have you not yet perused it?" he inquired.

"No, but we will now read it together," she said, as she placed the letter open in his hands, and drew herself closely to his side.

He opened and read the letter. It was in substance the same as the one he had received. The guardian repeated to the bride-elect all that he had already written to the bridegroom expectant; and he implored her to let no false delicacy, or fancied respect for his memory, influence her to defer the solemnization of her marriage with her betrothed. He reminded her that the best mark of respect that they could both pay to him would be to obey his last wishes as expressed in his last letter. And he concluded by invoking the blessing of Heaven upon their union.

"Never were a father's commands so congenial. Never was the duty of obedience so delightful. I thank and bless my dear father for his thoughtful affection. What say you, my dearest Geraldine?" earnestly inquired Fitzgerald.

"It shall be as your father and you wish. On this day, four weeks hence, I will be your wife; but there can be no pageantry, no festivity; the ceremony must be performed very quietly, and in the presence of our family circle only. Family circle did I say?

"Ah me! we have no family circle! We are each the last of our house! But of course I referred to my guardian's family, with whom I am staying."

"Bless you, my love, my queen! In the midst of all my trouble you have made me very happy," exclaimed the lover, as he gathered his betrothed to his bosom.

"Come, now," she whispered, after a long embrace. "It is time to rejoin our friends in the drawing-room.

He drew her arm through his and they passed out

happy as only lovers can be who are reconciled after a bitter quarrel.

The long summer twilight was fading into night, and Jeremy, the hall footman, was just lighting the chandelier as they passed him.

They entered the long drawing-room, where all the parties who had remained at the house after the reading of the will, were assembled. The room was but half-lighted, and the company were sitting about in small groups talking in subdued voices. Several individuals looked up, smiled, or slightly changed their positions as the betrothed pair came in. Mr. Fitzgerald led Geraldine to a seat, and stood leaning over the back of her chair while he said, in a low tone:

"I think, my dearest, that as all our guests here are our most intimate family connections, and have witnessed the delivery of these letters to us, and even evinced some natural curiosity and interest respecting them, I had better make known their contents to the company. By doing so we shall prevent any misconception of our conduct, and so prepare our relatives to understand our motives of our speedy marriage. But I will do nothing without your approbation. What do you advise, my dear?"

"I am willing to be guided by your own judgment, Gerald," she answered.

With that he stood up, lifted his head, and said:

"My friends, we desire your attention for a few moments. You will remember that you saw Mr. Keyworth place two letters, written by my father, in our hands: and that when I had read mine I told you that it contained important counsel to me, to follow which, however, I should require the co-operation of another party."

"Yes, yes, exactly. We remember all that," said Royal Greenleaf.

"That other party was Miss Fitzgerald, my betrothed bride; and the counsel contained in the posthumous letters was that we should not postpone our marriage on account of the decease of the writer."

"I really do not see why you should," put in Royal Greenleaf.

"So, dear friends, you will comprehend that Miss Fitzgerald and myself, in agreeing upon an early day for our marriage, do but obey the last imperative commands of my late father and her guardian. I trust that you will let this be generally understood. We have fixed the twentieth of August, proximo, as our marriage-day."

"That is right. Let me congratulate you, my dear friends," said Royal Greenleaf, heartily.

"Let me shake hands with the bridegroom and kiss the fair bride-elect," exclaimed Mr. Ben Bowers, wringing the hand of Fitzgerald, and then turning to Geraldine; but the haughty beauty drew herself up, and held out her gloved hand, which Mr. Bowers gallantly lifted to his lips.

Just then a peal of derisive laughter rang out upon the air as the dark face of the mad woman Magdala appeared for an instant at the window and vanished.

All the company looked at each other in dismay.

"This is most unseemly," said Miss Sue Greenleaf, gravely.

"That poor creature ought really to be confined," said Royal.

Colonel Fitzgerald rang the bell, which was speedily answered by the appearance of Jeremy, to whom he said:

"Search the grounds for the woman Magdala, and if it be possible, find her, and bring her into the house."

The man bowed, and backed out, to carry the order to the out-door servants. Then he re-appeared to announce dinner.

Colonel Fitzgerald arose and gave his arm to Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald, Royal took Geraldine, Mr. Bowers conducted Miss Sue Greenleaf, Mr. Keyworth drew Patricia's little hand within his arm, and Mr. Goodwin and Gertrude followed, and so the company proceeded to the dining-room.

It was a very grave and ceremonious feast, which no one but the three elder gentlemen, Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Keyworth, and Mr. Bowers seemed to enjoy.

All the others appeared to feel relieved when the meal was over, and they were at liberty to adjourn to the drawing-room.

There also Jeremy came to announce that the search for the poor, crazed wanderer Magdala, had been quite fruitless. She could not be found upon the premises, and was supposed to have gone away.

Soon after this the company separated, and retired to their several chambers.

By Miss Sue Greenleaf's desire, she and her young protégée, Gertrude Haddon, occupied adjoining rooms, with a communicating door. Miss Sue very often called her favourite into her own chamber for a little gossip, previous to retiring. This evening, as usual, she said, on reaching the door of her room:

"Come in, my little True. We have so much to talk over! But you look pale, my little girl. What is the matter with you?" she suddenly asked, when in seating herself on her large rocking-chair, she looked into the lovely face of her young protégée.

"Indeed, nothing is the matter, dear Miss Sue," said Gertrude, smiling gravely, and seating herself on a foot-stool at the feet of the lady.

"Ah! then, I suppose you are tired with all this turmoil. Well, and so Colonel and Miss Fitzgerald have made up their quarrel. Ah, well, it is to be hoped that their reconciliation will be permanent," said Miss Sue, with a sigh.

"Oh! why should it not be so, dear Miss Greenleaf? They looked so perfectly happy this evening! And they are to be married so soon," said Gertrude, gravely.

"I don't know," my dear. You know this proposed marriage was not one of *their* seeking, firstly. It was a marriage made up by his father and her guardian—a marriage of convenience in which the union of lands was more considered than the union of hearts or the union of hands."

"But they seem so devoted to each other?"

"I do not know, my dear, though at one time he certainly did seem to be very much attached to her," said Miss Sue, dubiously.

"Oh, he is devoted to her now," said Gertrude, with an unconscious sigh. "And they are such a splendid couple! They are both equally matched in majestic beauty. They seem to have been made for each other."

"*They* made for each other! Oh, you inexperienced child! Two such imperious creatures as Gerald and Geraldine made for each other! Never! They would torture and madden each other to the end of their lives. Oh, no, Gertrude! Geraldine should marry some obtuse, phlegmatic, easy-going duke or prince, who could give her a title and—her own way. Gerald should marry some meek, adoring little saint, who would lose all herself in loving him, her lord. No, Gertrude, if that proud, jealous young pair ever marry, which I doubt, they will torment each other into madness, or death, or separation, or even divorce, within a very few years," said Miss Sue, with a sigh.

"Now Heaven forbid that any such unhappiness should ever come to them," earnestly exclaimed Gertrude, as she arose to her feet.

"Are you going, my dear child?"

"Yes, Miss Sue, if you please."

"Are you sleepy, or tired?"

"Oh, no, ma'am."

"Then don't go. It is early yet, and I have got a new book. Horatia Rowley brought it to me. By the way, talking of Horatia Rowley, do you know that harum-scarum brother of hers—Sallust, I mean, of course—has gone abroad?"

"Indeed! No, I did not know it."

"Oh, yes; they got a letter from him, dated New York, in which he said he should sail for Liverpool that day, and would write again when he reached port."

"Did he say why he went abroad so unexpectedly?" inquired Gertrude in a low voice.

"No, he did not. You know of course that he made a flying visit here on the night of the fifteenth and was off before morning."

"Yes," said Gertrude, with a peculiar smile, as she remembered the eccentric traveller whom she had rowed across the ferry on the night of the storm.

"Well, my dear, the next day officers of justice came down from Richmond in search of *somebody*, and it *was* said, of him, and that he is in some great trouble."

"But who says this?" inquired Gertrude, with awakened interest.

"Oh, my dear, no very reliable informant — Ben Bowers told me about it, and when I asked him for his authority he could only give me bar-room gossip of the Wildeville hotel. Sometimes I think that my niece Patricia knows more than she is willing to tell. You must understand that it was she who received him on his flying visit to this house, and who afterwards received some strangers who came down the same morning, supposed to be the officers in search of Sallust. But whenever we ask Patricia anything about the affair, she gives us foolish or derisive answers, as, 'They were not bum baillies at all, they were four knights out of Spain, a courting of her daughter Jane,' or 'that they were a deputation from the forty thieves,' or some such nonsense. We cannot get a word out of Pat."

Gertrude smiled as she remembered the stormy night of the fifteenth of July, and the scene between herself and the terrified fugitive, when the officers of justice were in pursuit of him, and on the other side of the river vociferating "Boat." That was a secret known only to herself and to the hunted boy whom she had rowed across the ferry and sheltered in her house, as in a moated castle all night long. And she felt that she must never betray the secret of one who had trusted his life or liberty to her honour. She felt, besides, as she had felt from the first of her acquaintance with him, that whatever trouble the impetuous boy might have got into he was really innocent.

While Miss Sue was talking, she was also searching among the articles on the table by which she sat for something which apparently she could not find.

"Is it this book you are looking for, Miss Sue?" inquired Gertrude, picking up a thin flat volume in the then fashionable style of binding, blue board covers and white back, and lettered in black characters. "St. Ronan's Well, a novel by Sir Walter Scott, Bart., Vol. I."

"Yes, my dear, that is it—the first volume. And I think we have time to read an hour before going to bed. Sit down, my dear."

And so saying, Miss Sue composed herself back in her easy-chair, put her feet upon a footstool, and turned to the first page of the story.

Gertrude sat coiled up in the corner of a sofa near at hand.

Miss Sue read aloud, and very soon the attention of both the elderly maiden lady and the young girl became absorbed in the fortunes of "Clara Mowbray." They read for two hours, and then Miss Sue closed the book, saying:

"There! I read more than I intended to, but you know we have got to read fast, for there are several ladies waiting to borrow this book."

Miss Sue spoke the truth, for if ever any individual happened to become the owner of a novel in Wilde county, he or she was compelled by custom to lend it from one to another, until everybody who wished to do so had read it. Thus libraries of light reading seldom accumulated in that part of the country.

"Well, my dear, it is nearly twelve o'clock, and now I think we will go to bed," said Miss Sue.

Gertrude kissed her patroness good night, and retired to her own room. Late as the hour was, she did not feel inclined to sleep.

But she prepared herself for bed, and then put out the lamp that was burning on the mantelpiece, and went and opened the shutters of her windows that overlooked the magnificent prospect of Wilde River, with the stupendous precipices on the other side, all seen now in the clear obscure of a brilliant, starlit summer night. Finally, leaving the shutters open, she went to bed and turned upon her right side, from which position she could still watch the starlit sky, the mountains, and the river which reflected both; for she knew that she must lie awake. She could neither sleep nor understand her sleeplessness.

"Oh! why," she asked herself—"why can I not turn my thoughts away from Colonel Fitzgerald? He is not among my kindred that I should be thinking of him always! What is that stately gentleman to me that I should presume to occupy my mind with him at all? Only, I cannot help it. How did it happen? Let me think. Let me examine myself. Doctor Goodwin says that self-examination is a sacred duty. How did it all—Oh! first I know it was such a deep delight only just to think about him, only just to get away by myself and

think about him—to recall his stately form, his fine face, his splendid eyes, so full of authority, yet so full of tenderness, and his voice so deep, yet so gentle! Yes, it was such an exquisite delight only to get away from everybody and close my eyes, and dream over again the hours, or even the moments, I had lived in the light of his life-giving presence! I did not know such deep joy could ever turn to pain. And even if I had known it, I could not have helped it!

"But then came trouble to him—his bride's fierce anger, his father's death—and I who had gloried in him so much, I dared to pity him! Yes, I dared to pity *him*, as if he had been any other man! Then, oh! how I longed to do something for him, to *be* something to him, to suffer something for him! I prayed to the Lord, if it were possible for us to bear each other's mental and spiritual burden's, as bear their physical and material ones, I prayed to the Lord that, if it were possible, the burden of sorrow might be lifted from his royal heart and laid upon my lowly one. That my king might sit in light and joy as was his kingly right. I was not so unhappy even then, for I was praying for him. And now, without my poor help, all his darkness is turned into light, his sorrow into joy; he is reconciled to his bride, and is going to marry her in a few days! I ought to be greatful to Heaven, and happy again in thinking of him. But I am not! I am not! Oh! why am I no longer delighted in thinking of his happiness? Why is my heart oppressed with heaviness? Why do I feel such a sense of loneliness? I do not know. I cannot help it!"

Poor child! She had been not only motherless from her birth, but she had been utterly destitute of woman's care. Neither had she mixed with other women, or had any sort of experience in life, in books, or in human nature, that would have guided her to a knowledge of herself. Thus her whole heart was giving itself away in love, in adoration, in worship of one man; her whole spirit was merging itself in the life of that man in a self-devotion as complete as it was unconscious.

Her self-examination, poor child, was not very satisfactory. She saw that she had taken more exquisite delight in recalling and contemplating his image, and in

living over again in memory the hours she had spent in his presence, than she had ever found in any other condition. She felt that she had been deeply troubled with his troubles, even to the depth of praying to the Lord that she herself might be permitted, if possible, to suffer in his stead. But now—oh, sad mystery—now that without her help in any way he was happy in his reconciliation with his bride, she could not rejoice with him! She had been miserable in his misery. Why could she not now be happy in his happiness? She did not know. She only felt her spirit cast back upon itself, driven into the wilderness! She felt herself to be the loneliest creature in all the Lord's lovely world, as if all her fellow beings were more distant from her than those brilliant globes of fire far off in the sidereal heavens, upon which she looked as she lay. At length, in her loneliness, she folded her hands and prayed, and so praying, grew less lonely, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A GREAT SHOCK TO GERTRUDE.

EARLY in the next week the company of friends and relatives assembled at Summit Manor House broke up and separated to their several homes.

The Greenwood family were the last to leave. Two large travelling carriages, one belonging to Summit Manor and the other to Greenwood Farm, were brought around to the door, after all the other vehicles had rolled away.

In the first carriage Colonel Fitzgerald handed Miss Sue Greenleaf, Miss Fitzgerald and Gertrude, and then he took the remaining seat himself. It happened to be next to Gertrude, because Miss Greenleaf and Miss Fitzgerald occupied the back seat, leaving only the front to the young girl and their escort.

Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald, Patricia, Mr. Royal Greenleaf, and Cousin Ben Bowers entered the second carriage. And in this order the whole party went on toward Greenwood.

It is the party in the first carriage with which we are mostly concerned. It was not a very talkative one.

Miss Sue having nothing heavier on her sentimental mind, and holding her half-read novel in her hand, took furtive glances between its pages, wondering what the mystery of the heroine's melancholy madness could mean, and reading occasionally by stealth.

Geraldine sat with her black veil over her face glancing from time to time at the grave face of her lover, who was in the farthest corner from her, next to the "ferry-girl," as she mentally and contemptuously styled Gertrude, and wondering why Miss Sue Greenleaf, with all her natural refinement, could make such an intimate associate of such a low-born young woman, as to take her into the carriage, and even receive her in the drawing-room and at the dinner-table. "Well," said Miss Fitzgerald to herself, "I cannot, of course, control the usages of the household at Greenwood, but when once I find myself mistress of the Summit Manor, I shall take good care that no person of *that* class shall ever find entrance into my drawing-room or dining-room except in capacity of a servant."

Gerald Fitzgerald was not quite unconscious of Geraldine's annoyance, nor yet quite unaffected by it; but he could not understand it. He explored his memory for any record of a recent cause of offence given by him. He could find none. So he only sighed over his betrothed bride's sulkiness, and tried to think of some delicate way of dispelling it.

The only happy occupant of the carriage was Gertrude Haddon. Only in the week before she had felt herself to be the loneliest creature in the Lord's universe. Now she felt perfectly satisfied to sit beside one she worshipped as a god, and to see him smile upon her sometimes as a man would smile upon a child; yet to feel that smile sink deep into her heart, filling it with light and joy.

It was nearly two o'clock when the carriages reached Greenwood. The company had just time to go to their

rooms and lay off their outer garments before being called to partake of the dainty and abundant lunch that the forethought of Aunt Het, who expected them, had prepared.

After luncheon, as by a tacit agreement, the members of the household dispersed to their several occupations or recreations, and left the betrothed lovers to return to the drawing-room alone.

Miss Sue Greenleaf took Gertrude and retired to her room to enjoy an hour's reading of "St. Ronan's Well."

Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald and Patricia went into the store-room to pack a basket of jellies and home-made wine to send to a poor consumptive neighbour.

Mr. Royal Greenleaf and Cousin Ben Bowers strolled out to the stables and kennels to look at the horses and hounds.

Gerald Fitzgerald followed Geraldine to the drawing-room, seated himself beside her on the sofa, took her hand, pressed it to his lips, and whispered the question which had been troubling him all the morning:

"What has happened to annoy you? Is it anything over which I have any control? Tell me, my own dear Gertrude."

"Your own dear *who?*" demanded Geraldine, knitting her brows.

"Why, what is the matter with you, dearest Geraldine? Oh, I see now. Forgive me, dearest love. It was but a stupid slip of the tongue. I am as bad as my old nurse Jessie, who always gets her proverbs hind part foremost. But—"

"Pray, are you in the habit of addressing that ferry-girl as your own dear Gertrude, Colonel Fitzgerald?" inquired Geraldine, with a curling lip.

"Why certainly I am not. You know that I am not. I address no woman in that style except you, my betrothed, and my only beloved. As for Miss Haddon, I would as soon take such a liberty with a princess as with her," said Fitzgerald, earnestly.

"Indeed! Pray, since when has this ferry-girl been called Miss Haddon?"

"Ever since I have known her, which has been only

since my last return to the neighbourhood," patiently answered Fitzgerald.

"Really? Then I think it required a very short time for her to become your 'own dear Gertrude,'" exclaimed Miss Fitzgerald, scornfully.

Colonel Fitzgerald gazed at her in sorrow and perplexity, would have taken her hand, but she flung his away from her and folded her arms. Her eyes were sparkling, her colour rising, her bosom heaving.

"Geraldine! dearest Geraldine, do not be angry, do not be unreasonable. Listen to me. I will be perfectly frank with you—truthful with you as I am with my Lord. Geraldine, my utterance of that poor child's name—"

"You even speak of her with tenderness! You cannot speak of her but with tenderness," exclaimed the young fury, vehemently.

"With *pity*, Geraldine, with *pity*, deep pity, that is all. Listen to me, my beloved. I was thinking of that poor little meek orphan, and wondering what her future was to be—for it is whispered that old Gabriel Haddon has left a daughter of his own, who, if she should be found, would inherit the property and thus leave this poor little dove-eyed child as bereft of home and means as she is of kindred and friends."

"Oh, I have no doubt you would be delighted to provide for such a dove-eyed darling!"

"Geraldine!"

"Make her your housekeeper or—something."

"Miss Fitzgerald!" exclaimed the lover.

"Is she not your 'own dear Gertrude,' 'meek child,' 'dearest Gertrude,' 'dove-eyed girl?' and the Lord knows what else," snarled the young tigress, all her beauty distorted by rage, as she sprang to her feet and began walking the floor with rapid strides.

"What a tempest in a tea-pot," cried Gerald Fitzgerald, a sense of humour mingling with and modifying his just indignation. "What a tornado! It seems, then, that I am to have no freedom at all. I may not even feel or express any pity for a poor orphan child—"

"Colonel Fitzgerald! this is trifling," exclaimed Geraldine, pausing in her walk, and standing before him with heaving bosom, flushed face and flashing eyes.

"Understand me, once for all. I will share no man's love with any other woman living. I certainly will not degrade myself by sharing yours with a low-lived ferry-girl. Who is this Gertrude Haddon? Who knows anything about her except that she was an abandoned foundling, an infamous child—"

"Infamous child! Oh, Geraldine, what profanation of words. How can a *child* be infamous?" said Gerald Fitzgerald, in a tone of rebuke at once sad and tender.

"The child of infamous parents, then. That is all that is known of this ferry-girl, who was found and brought up by Gabriel Haddon. And now hear me, Gerald Fitzgerald! I say I will not share your heart, or even your attentions, with this low-born girl!"

"Geraldine! I command you to be silent!" said Fitzgerald, in a deep stern voice, as he pointed to the open door.

She followed the direction of his finger with her eyes, and was mute.

For, there, within the open door, stood Gertrude Haddon, white and still as a marble statue, showing in the meek despair of her face that every cruel, scornful word launched by Miss Fitzgerald had stabbed her gentle heart and transfixed her there without the power of moving, to advance or retreat.

Colonel Fitzgerald arose and stepped quickly across the room, took her arm gently, and led her away, saying kindly as he did so:

"Come to Miss Greenleaf, my child. I suppose we shall find her in the sisters' parlour."

"Oh, Colonel Fitzgerald, I did not know, *indeed* I did not know."

"Did not know what, my dear!"

"That you and Miss Fitzgerald were in the drawing-room. I went there to get a book for Miss Sue—the second volume of a book she is reading. Ah, oh! I never, never thought—"

"Never thought what, my child? Compose yourself, my dear."

"That I was a trouble to Miss Fitzgerald. But I will go away—indeed, I will go and give no more trouble."

"Where would you go, my little Gertrude?" inquired

Fitzgerald, led by his loving kindness into more tenderness of manner towards her than he wished to display, as he opened the door of the sisters' parlour and took her in.

The room was vacant; but the tall figure of Miss Greenleaf was plainly seen through the open window, walking on the lawn.

"Where would you go if you were to leave this place, my child?" he repeated, kindly.

"Oh, I would go to my own old ferry home, where old John and Jess, who love me, would take care of me, where I would return to my old ferry-life, and be useful instead of being troublesome to people," answered Gertrude, as she dropped trembling into a large arm-chair, and sunk back, pale and weary-looking.

"The ferry-house is no proper home for a young, unprotected girl. I am sure your guardian would not permit it. Who is your guardian, by the way?"

"Dr. Goodwin is one, Mr. Royal Greenleaf is the other. I could also go to Dr. Goodwin."

"He is a childless widower. There is no lady at the head of his establishment. It would not do."

"Then I will ask Miss Sue Greenleaf where I may go.

"I will go wherever my elders tell me."

"But why should you go at all, my child? Why should you leave the home assigned you by your guardian?"

"Oh, because I must—I must—*indeed* I must, Colonel Fitzgerald. But I will ask Miss Sue Greenleaf where I can go."

"Do so, my dear child. I think that she will decide that you shall go nowhere, but that you must stay here under her excellent protection. But here comes Miss Greenleaf to answer for herself," said Colonel Fitzgerald, as he saw Miss Sue with a large spray of moss roses in her hand, re-enter the house. The next moment she came into the room.

"Oh, you are here, Colonel! Sit down. Gertrude, my dear, did you bring the book I sent you for?" said Miss Sue as she went up to the mantlepiece and added her moss roses to the fresh bouquet of flowers in the vase.

"No, Miss Sue—I—" began the girl, but being unable to explain why she had not brought it, she stopped in the middle of the sentence.

"Allow me to fetch it, madame," said Colonel Fitzgerald, politely.

"Thanks. It is the second volume of 'St. Ronan's Well.' You will find it, if you will be so good, on the stand in the bay-window," said Miss Sue, blandly.

Fitzgerald bowed and left the parlour.

When he re-entered the drawing-room he found his indignant bride-elect walking rapidly up and down the floor.

"I have been waiting for you, Colonel Fitzgerald. I have something to say to you," she muttered, without looking at him or pausing in her walk.

"One moment, Geraldine, and I will be at your orders," he replied, not unkindly, as he crossed the room, took the book from the stand, and went out. He carried it into the sisters' parlour, and placed it in the hands of Miss Sue, with a bow, and hurried back to the drawing-room.

"Now, my dear Geraldine, I am at your service. Will you not be seated?" he inquired, drawing a large resting-chair towards her.

"No; I will neither sit nor stand," she answered, continuing her walk.

He sighed, stood on the hearth, and rested his elbow on the mantelshelf, and waited for her to speak.

"I told you, Colonel Fitzgerald," began Geraldine, still walking rapidly up and down the room—"I told you that I would not share the heart of any living man with any other living woman. I also told you that I would not share your attentions with a low-born ferry-girl! It revolts me to be obliged to sit in the same room with her, at the same dining-table with her; but I am in my guardian's house, and must submit to his old maid sister's whims—or, rather, I have had to do so; but I will do so no longer. I tell you farther, Colonel Fitzgerald, that you must cease to pay any attentions whatever to the ferry-girl."

"I have never paid Miss Haddon any attention except such as it is the bounden duty of any gentleman to pay

any lady who happens to be in his company," said Gerald Fitzgerald, quietly.

"'Miss Haddon' and 'lady'! I declare, Colonel Fitzgerald, you seem to have very crude ideas of what constitues a lady! But I suppose the many years you have spent in the frontier forts and in the company of savages and back-woodsmen have demoralized your sense of propriety to some extent," sneered Geraldine.

He waited quietly to hear what more she had to say. Soon she continued:

"You must cease your attentions to the ferry-girl at once. I will not endure to have them go on."

"Anything else, Geraldine?" he inquired, very calmly.

"Yes, sir! You must go to Royal Greenleaf, and say to him that this low protégée of his mad sister—this low-born ferry-girl—must be sent away from the house. Sent away immediately. She can be provided for somewhere else. *I* am willing to provide for the creature; but she must be sent away at once. I will not *endure* her presence in the house for another day!"

"Is that all you require of me, Geraldine?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Yes; it is all, for the present," she answered, throwing herself into a chair at last, and looking at him.

He stood with his elbow resting on the mantelpiece, with his eyes fixed upon the floor. He stood, pale, still, and mute, until she spoke again.

"Do you intend to do my bidding, Colonel Fitzgerald?" she haughtily demanded.

"Assuredly I do not," he answered, emphatically.

"You do not!" she exclaimed, in indignant amazement.

"I do not. If I were to do that which you require of me, Geraldine, I should stand forever dishonoured and accursed in my own eyes. If any other man were to offer such an affront to Gertrude Haddon, even at your bidding, Geraldine, and Royal Greenleaf did not thrash him within an inch of his life, *I* should call them both to a severe account."

"You are the champion of this ferry-girl, I see," sneered Geraldine.

"She does not need a champion. If she did, every true man would be at her service."

"You defy me, sir!" exclaimed Geraldine, with flashing eyes.

"I defy no woman, least of all would I defy her I love."

"You are at issue with me, then. It is the same thing."

"I am at issue with you on this point only, my dear Geraldine."

"Do not call me 'dear'! I am not dear to you! You never loved me—never cared for me! I might have known it! Indeed, of late years I have known it," she cried, starting up and beginning to walk rapidly to and fro.

"Geraldine! for heaven's sake be calm. I *do* love you—utterly and—fatally—I sometimes think. You know I love you. You believe it in your better moods," said Fitzgerald, earnestly.

"I say you never loved me. I was *never* the first object in your life as you have been always in mine! I have always had to be sacrificed to some fanatic sense of duty, some Quixotic point of honour! And now, now it is to your patronage of a miserable ferry-girl!"

"Geraldine! Geraldine! You bitterly and cruelly wrong both that innocent child and myself! When you come to your right senses, you will know that you do!"

"What! do you think I can be deceived in the face of all I have seen and heard?" fiercely demanded the young fury, lashing herself into frenzy and betraying the hidden causes of her jealousy. "Do you think I am blind, deaf, or idiotic? I *heard*, Colonel Fitzgerald, on the very first evening of your arrival at this house, how you devoted yourself to that girl. You were told that I was confined to my room by sickness; so you consoled yourself with the ferry-girl. Oh, that I should live to know it! That is what I heard."

"Geraldine, I demand your authority for that story."

"Patricia!"

"That little mischievous, jesting, tricky elf! I wonder, Geraldine, you could have given a moment's serious attention to anything of that sort coming from such a fantastic creature."

"If I had given serious attention to it at the *time*, I assure you I should not have accorded to you the interview that subsequently took place between us in the library," said Geraldine, haughtily.

"And yet when I recall that night, I am persuaded that the report you had heard of me, however little attention you may have bestowed upon it, must have influenced your conduct during that painful interview," said Colonel Fitzgerald, gravely.

"It may indeed have done so, and justified me in anything I might have said or done there. At all events, Colonel Fitzgerald, all that I have *seen* to-day has corroborated all that I *heard* that night! I *saw* the pressure of the hand with which you helped that girl into the carriage when we were leaving the Summit. I *saw* the manner in which you took your seat by her side. I *saw* the way in which you looked at her. My thick black veil was down, and perhaps you thought I could not see! but, remember, *I* could see you, though you could not see my face. Yes, I *saw* your gaze and your smiles—yes, and her downcast eyes and blushing cheeks and conscious looks. Oh, it was as plain as daylight! *You* thought because my face was closely veiled and Miss Greenleaf's attention was absorbed by her book, that your quiet flirtation with the ferry-girl could go on right before our faces without being perceived. You were mistaken, Colonel Fitzgerald. I saw it all! And what I *saw* with my eyes to-day, confirms all that I heard from Patricia that night. Did you happen to suppose, Colonel Fitzgerald, that your accidental use of that girl's name instead of mine, unconnected with what had gone before, could have given me offence? No! no more than if with a slip of the tongue you had called me Patricia. And now the crowning insult! When I demand that you break with this girl and have her sent from the house, you refuse to do it. Gerald Fitzgerald, I will not take you at your first rash word of denial. I will give you another chance, for I—love you! I appeal to you by your love for me—if indeed you have any—Gerald, if you love me, break with that girl and insist upon her being sent away from the house!"

"Geraldine, you *know* that I love you; but I cannot do what you require of me! If I *could* do such a thing,

I repeat it, I should stand forever dishonoured and accursed in my own eyes," he replied, firmly and sadly.

"You *never* loved me! And I—fool! fool! fool! and thrice sodden fool that I have been *ever* to have believed it! Our betrothal was a farce! worse than a farce, it was a crime; the crime of a foolish old man and an ambitious young one, who conspired to deprive a poor little five-year old baby of her liberty and her land at once, and to bind her to a cold-hearted traitor, who has given her indifference for her love, and treachery for her trust!"

"Geraldine, Geraldine, for heaven's sake have a care!" exclaimed Colonel Fitzgerald, almost driven, at last, from his self-command.

"For what should I have a care? I care for nothing, Colonel Fitzgerald!" she cried, beside herself with jealous rage. "Here, take your betrothal ring! And if ever I permit you to put it on my finger again, may Geraldine Fitzgerald stand 'dishonoured and accursed' not only in her 'own eyes,' but in the eyes of all the world!"

And with this terrible imprecation upon her own mad head, she tore her ring from her finger, and hurled it with violence to the feet of her lover.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A TERRIBLE INVOCATION.

FOR a moment Gerald Fitzgerald stood gazing "more in sorrow than in anger" on the engagement ring that she had flung at his feet.

"I will not a second time take up your ring, Geraldine," he said, at length. "I will not again take you at your hasty word. When you come to yourself, you will be generous enough to acknowledge the wrong you have done, and you will replace the ring upon your finger. As for me, I will endeavour to forget all that has passed this afternoon."

His words instead of appeasing, seemed to infuriate her.

"You think that 'when I come to myself,' as you call it, I shall be the first to acknowledge the 'wrong' I have done, and to replace the ring upon my finger. You count upon a repetition of my late folly, when I came to you, like an idiot, and forgetting my own dignity, sued to you for a reconciliation. *Oh-h-h!* if you only knew how I *despise* myself now for that pitiable weakness. And *you* expect me to repeat it. Hear me, Colonel Fitzgerald!" and as she spoke, her eyes contracted and gleamed, and her face to her very lips grew livid with intense rage—"hear me!—If ever I take up that ring and replace it on my finger, may it eat into my flesh like a canker and poison my blood to death. If ever I sue to *you* for a reconciliation, *may you spurn me like a slave from your presence.* Now, go, an never let me see your face again if you can help it!"

Gerald Fitzgerald bowed very low, turned and left the room, leaving the jealous young fury to come to her senses at her leisure.

In the meantime, Miss Sue Greenleaf and Gertrude Haddon were holding a conference in the sisters' parlour. As soon as Colonel Fitzgerald had placed in Miss Greenleaf's hand the book he had brought for her, and left the room, she turned to Gertrude and observing for the first time her disturbed countenance, she said:

"You are pale and trembling, my little True! What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, Miss Greenleaf, I must go away from this place immediately," answered the girl, in agitated tones.

"You go away? And why, pray?" inquired the lady.

"Oh, Miss Sue, because—because Miss Fitzgerald does not like my being here," answered Gertrude in the same perturbed manner.

"Miss Fitzgerald does not like your being here? What an idea. Don't take such fancies into your head, my child."

"Oh, Miss Sue, it is no fancy; I do not take fancies, indeed I do not. But when you sent me to the drawing-room to get the book, just as I entered the door I heard Miss Fitzgerald telling the colonel that he must have me sent away from this house; that I was— I do not remember the exact words; but the meaning of them was, that I was not a fit companion for herself, and that therefore she required that I should be dismissed from the house," said Gertrude, as her pale cheeks became suffused at the remembrance of the insult.

"Geraldine Fitzgerald said that!" exclaimed Miss Greenleaf, flushing with generous indignation.

"Indeed, madame, she did; and therefore, you see, I must go."

"She said that. You heard her. What did you say?"

"I? Nothing, madame. I grew so weak that I leaned against the door-post."

"And Gerald Fitzgerald, what did he say?"

"Something sharp. I do not know what. I think my senses were about to leave me then, for he saw me, and sprang across the room and spoke to me, and led me in here. Then I grew better."

"I see, I see how it is. Geraldine will ruin her own happiness and that of every one with whom she is connected," said Miss Greenleaf, meditatively.

"Now, you see, my dear Miss Sue, that I *must* go away. I do love to be here, and I love you—every one. But I must not stay, to be a cause of contention between Colonel Fitzgerald and his bride-elect; and, moreover, *I will not*," added Gertrude, with gentle firmness.

"You are quite right, my dear child. It would not be consistent with the delicacy and dignity of any girl to remain here under the circumstances. I thank Providence that in a few days more Gerald and Geraldine will be married and gone. Then, my little True, we shall have you back, if Dr. Goodwin will let you come. That is very doubtful, however. After the good doctor comes to know you, my little True, he will not easily part with you," said Miss Greenleaf.

At that moment Gerald Fitzgerald hastily entered the ladies' presence—hat, gloves and whip in his hand.

"I have come to bid you good-day, Miss Greenleaf," he said, in tones that he vainly strove to keep steady.

"But—I thought—you were going to stay to dinner," said Miss Sue, in surprise and perplexity.

"Not to-day, my dear lady. You will kindly excuse me."

"But you promised to stay and dine with us," persisted Miss Sue.

"I must beg of you, of your courtesy, to release me from that promise," said Colonel Fitzgerald, with grave politeness.

"Certainly, certainly, if important affairs call you away unexpectedly, you must be excused; but I am very sorry to have you go."

"In all sincerity, I assure you that I am very sorry to have to go, Miss Greenleaf," he said, taking her hand and bowing over it.

"Then at least come and dine with us to-morrow," suggested Miss Sue.

"I fear that will be impossible, my dear lady."

"Then any day you please. Come without notice. We shall always be ready to receive you, and glad to welcome you; and stay as long as you may—the longer you favour us with your company the better we shall like it."

"Thanks, dear Miss Greenleaf. I shall take the very

first opportunity to avail myself of your kind permission. Good-day, madame; good-day, Miss Haddon."

And with a bow, Colonel Fitzgerald withdrew from the room.

Miss Greenleaf and Gertrude looked at each other, but did not speak until they were aroused by the sound of his horse's hoofs galloping from the house. Then Miss Sue said:

"As sure as you live, Gertrude, that beautiful fury, Geraldine, has flown at him again!"

"Oh, Miss Greenleaf!" murmured the girl.

"I am sure she has quarrelled with him and broken with him again. I know it by his looks. He adores her, Gertrude. But, oh, she tries him! You are right, my dear girl, in one thing, entirely right. You shall go to your venerable guardian and stay with him until this marriage between Gerald and Geraldine takes place—if it ever takes place—and then you shall return here and be our child. Let me see. It is now four o'clock. I will send Hannibal off to Wildeville with a note to Dr. Goodwin, asking him to come over here to-morrow and see us. I will not tell him in my note what he is wanted for, lest it might be lost and fall into other hands. Have courage, my child, all will be well with you," said Miss Sue, as she rang the bell.

When a man-servant answered the summons she ordered him to go to the stables and direct Hannibal to saddle a horse and come around to the house, and be ready to carry a note to Dr. Goodwin. And when the man withdrew to deliver his message, she turned to her writing-desk and wrote a few lines, which she sealed up and took out to her courier.

When Miss Greenleaf returned to the sisters' parlour, dinner was announced. She took Gertrude's hand, drew it within her arm in a protecting manner, and led her to the dining-room. The family were already assembled there. The party around the table consisted of Mrs. Doy and Miss Patricia Fitzgerald, Mr. Royal and Miss Sue Greenleaf, cousin Ben Bowers and Gertrude. There were two vacant places—those of Gerald and Geraldine Fitzgerald.

"Where are those two moon-calves, Sue? Spooning

somewhere, I do suppose, and forgetting that there is any such a thing as a dinner in the world," said Mr. Royal Greenleaf, referring to Colonel and Miss Fitzgerald.

"Gerald has been called away on business, and has left his compliments and regrets," answered Miss Sue.

"Umph! umph! umph! to be taken as before, I suppose! And where is the 'dark-eyed, queenly Geraldine,' as that military spoon calls her?" pursued Royal.

"Geraldine is indisposed after her long ride, and has gone to lie down."

"Umph, umph, umph, to be taken as before again! Our beautiful Geraldine's indispositions generally consist in severe cramps in her temper. Ah, well, it is honestly come by—the family temper, eh, Pat?"

"The family demon I call it, uncle," answered Patricia.

After dinner Miss Sue Greenleaf beckoned her brother to follow her into the sisters' parlour, and when she found herself there alone with him she confided to him the story told her by Gertrude, and the necessity that grew out of it of sending the orphan girl away until after the marriage and departure of Miss Fitzgerald.

"Well, Sue, the young lady—for she *is* a young lady, every inch of her—is *your* protégée, not mine. You must do with her as you please; but as for *me*, well as I like Gerald Fitzgerald and his young vixen of a sweetheart, I would see them both in the bottomless pit, before I would let her go on their account," said Royal, in a generous fit of indignation.

"It is not on *their* account, dear Roy; it is on Gertrude's own. I will not have her here, exposed to the scornful taunts of any jealous woman."

"Meaning the 'dark-eyed, queenly,' I s'pose?"

"Yes, Geraldine."

"Then why not send Geraldine off? Since she is the one in fault, it seems to me she is the one to be bowed out, especially since she is rich and powerful; while the other poor little one, besides being blameless, is poor and dependent. Send Geraldine away—send Geraldine away."

"Oh, Roy, that would never, never do. Besides,

Gertrude is not so poor and dependent as she seems. Old Mr. Haddon left her the ferry estate."

"Moonshine! It has been discovered that old Haddon left a daughter by his lawful wife, Lilian Vale, who, if she can be found, is the legal heiress of the ferry in right of her father; and not only of the ferry, in right of her father, but of about one-half of Wilde county, in right of her mother. This poor Gertrude would be a beggar. Not that I would think the less of her on that account, but rather the more," said Royal.

"Stay—good Heaven! what is that you say about Gabriel Haddon leaving a daughter by his lawful wife, Lilian Vale?" asked Miss Sue, aghast.

"I said that it has been discovered that he left such a daughter, although the poor wronged man never knew that he had a daughter until within a few days before his death."

"But good heavens! if that is so—if Lily Vale left a daughter—that daughter is the legal heiress of Forest Lodge, Stone Alone, Wildwood, Rock Hall, and, in short, of every manor now held by Geraldine Fitzgerald, for you know Geraldine's father only inherited all that property on the supposed failure of Alvan Vale's heirs."

"I know it; and a pretty mess there would be if the girl—woman, rather; for, if living, she must now be between thirty and forty years of age: a pretty kettle of fish there'd be if she were to be found! But that is so improbable as to be well nigh impossible; it is so long since all trace of her has been lost. However, old Dr. Goodwin's parishioners are going to send him abroad this autumn for his health, and he means to take the opportunity of instituting a search in London for this missing heiress."

"For a needle in a haystack! What clue has he to guide him?"

"Oh, he has the address of the doctor who attended Lilian Vale—or, rather, Lilian Haddon—in her confinement, and also of the nurse who took charge of the child. But as these addresses are over thirty years old and the people to whom they referred were even then past middle age, it seems scarcely possible that they can be living now. All this was told me in the strictest confidence by Dr. Goodwin, but for goodness' sake, Sue, don't

breathe it to a human being! I ought *never* to have told you, but it slipped out, somehow, and I am very sorry it did. I am not fit to keep a secret, and I do wish Dr. Goodwin had only thought of that when he confided one to me. I never had a secret of my own in my life, and I oughtn't to be trusted with other people's," said Mr. Greenleaf, with a mortified air.

"Be tranquil, Roy., I *can* keep a secret. I shall never hint this one to anybody," said Miss Sue.

"No, for Heaven's sake don't, Sue. Just think of the effect it would have upon 'the dark eyed, queenly' to hear it even hinted that there could be a possibility of a missing heiress being recovered to turn her out of her kingdom of half a dozen manors!" said Royal, in dismay.

"I will never breathe it, Roy. But we have wandered from a subject which is, after all, of more immediate interest to me—Gertrude. I have sent for Dr. Goodwin to come here to-morrow and see us. When he comes I intend to ask him to take Gertrude home with him."

"Look here, Sue. She is your protégée, not mine. But I'll tell you what: I— Yes, rather than you should do that, I would send Geraldine away and fight Gerald, as, in that case, I should have to do, for he would be sure to call me out."

"What nonsense you talk, Roy. We cannot possibly be so rude to our own cousin and your ward. Besides, every consideration of womanly dignity and delicacy urges Gertrude to withdraw herself from the house at this juncture. Dr. Goodwin must take her away to-morrow. After Geraldine is married and gone, I shall bring her back."

"You will do well to bring her back if she goes; for, see here, Sue—I may as well tell you now as at any other time—I intend to ask Gertrude Haddon to be my wife, and if she should consent, I will make her the mistress of Greenwood. What do you say to that?"

"Gertrude is very young, yet, Roy. She is little more than fifteen years old. You should wait at *least* three years longer, and it would be still wiser to wait five years before thinking of marriage for Gertrude Haddon," said Miss Sue, discreetly.

"But, bless my soul alive, Sue! I haven't time to

wait! I am forty-five years old now. I shall be fifty in five years. You see I haven't time to wait."

"Then, you should marry some older lady. There is Miss Maxima Rowley now—"

"Oh, the fiend fly away with Miss Maxima Rowley! Do you think I am going to marry an old maid like that?" angrily exclaimed Royal.

"Miss Maxima is just your own age—forty-five. Besides, Miss Maxima—"

"Drot Miss Maxima!" exclaimed Royal, flinging himself out of the room, in a passion.

"Now that is the way with men! It never occurs to them that it is quite as repugnant to a young woman to marry an old man as it is to a young man to marry an old woman. Here is Roy, throwing himself into a rage, at the bare idea of marrying a woman of his own age, yet presuming to think seriously of proposing marriage to a young girl of one-third his years," mused Miss Sue.

The entrance of her young protégée put an end to her meditation.

"Miss Sue, I have finished packing my box," said Gertrude, smiling, as she seated herself near the elder lady.

"Have you, my dear, that is well. Dr. Goodwin will be here early in the morning, no doubt, and we will not keep him waiting," answered Miss Sue.

No more was said on the subject, then. Miss Sue produced the second volume of St. Ronan's Well, and asked Gertrude to read aloud, while she, Miss Sue, worked at her embroidery. And so, with the short interlude of the tea-table, they passed the evening.

Early the next morning, according to Miss Sue's prediction, Dr. Goodwin arrived and asked to see Miss Greenleaf, who had sent for him.

Miss Sue received him alone in the sisters' parlour, and, without entering into any disagreeable explanations that might have compromised Geraldine in the pastor's good opinion, she merely informed him that for certain urgent reasons she would request him to receive Gertrude Haddon as a guest at the rectory until after the wedding should be over.

"For, although the marriage will be comparatively a

private one, yet according to custom, all the numerous family connections of the Fitzgeralds and Greenleafs will assemble here for days before the wedding, and will crowd every room in the house," said Miss Sue, with a little good-natured diplomacy.

"Yes, my good lady; of course, I quite understand that, and I will gladly take the dear child home with me until after the wedding, and keep her as long after that, also, as you will permit her to stay," said the unsuspecting minister. "When can she be ready?" he asked, rising.

"She is ready now," said Miss Sue.

"Have her called, then, my dear lady. I will take her with me," said the pastor.

Miss Sue went out herself, and returned with Gertrude, who welcomed her reverend guardian with respectful affection. She had already taken leave of every member of the family except Miss Sue Greenleaf. She now kissed that good friend, who embraced her with fervent affection, and then delivered her over to Dr. Goodwin, saying:

"Immediately after the wedding I shall come for my darling."

"I shall be in no hurry to part with her, Miss Greenleaf," said Dr. Goodwin, as he led Gertrude out and placed her in his carriage. In the next moment he entered and drove off.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT THE RECTORY.

THE old Red Sandstone Church and Rectory stood side by side, both being perched upon the top of Wild Cat Cliff, overhanging the river, and overlooking the opposite mountain of Eagle Roost Ridge.

The old Red Sandstone Church was a picturesque edifice of the Gothic order of architecture, so completely overgrown with ivy that nothing of its exterior could be seen but the old oak door and stained-glass windows, from which the encroaching creepers had annually to be trimmed away. The church was surrounded by an old burial ground, whose white tombstones gleamed amid the shadows of thickly-clustering evergreen.

The old Red Sandstone Rectory, standing on the south side of the church, was a quaint, cozy, dwelling-place, with dark, ruddy walls, overgrown, like those of the church, with ivy; narrow, Gothic windows, over-shaded by creeping vines; high-peaked roof, and tall, slender chimneys, in many of which the house-swallows built their nests and enjoyed their homes in undisturbed repose. The house was surrounded by an old neglected garden of fruit trees and bushes, flowering shrubs, flowers and herbs. A gate on the north side of this garden communicated with the churchyard and a shaded walk that led to the church.

The approach both to the church and to the rectory was from the rear, because that way was considered safer than the road which skirted the cliffs in front of the buildings.

Along this back road, on that warm August day, came the rector's gig, with the rector and his ward seated within it. As they drew near the double green gate leading into the rectory grounds, which were so crowded with

untrimmed and overgrown trees and shrubs, that no part of the house except the peaked roof and tall chimneys could be seen, Dr. Goodwin slackened his old horse's pace and, turning to his young companion, said:

"You have never once been inside my solitary home, dear child, I think?"

"No, never once, sir," answered Gertrude.

"I fear you will find it very lonely after gay and crowded Greenwood."

"Oh! no, Dr. Goodwin. I am used to solitude. That is, I have always been accustomed to solitude until I came to Greenwood. It will be easy to return to my old habits of solitude."

"And pleasant also, my dear girl?"

"Very pleasant, Dr. Goodwin."

"Here we are, then," said the good minister, as the broad, green gates were thrown open by the gardener, who had come running up for that purpose, and they passed up the short but thickly-shaded drive, and drew up before the vine-shaded portico that led to the house.

The doctor threw the reins to the gardener, who had run all the way from the gate to take them.

"You see, my dear, at the rectory we have not a retinue of servants such as support the dignity of the Summit Manor House and Greenwood Hall. My faithful Boykins here has to be gardener, groom, porter, footman, and valet—all in his own person, just as his good wife, Barbara, is cook, laundress, and chamber-maid in herself. But then they have only one quiet old man to wait on, you see," he said, as he alighted and gave her his hand.

"And now they will have me to help them wait on him," added Gertrude, with a smile as she sprang from the gig.

"Will they, my dear? You are a good girl, but your good nature shall not be imposed upon in any such way," answered Dr. Goodwin, as he drew her hand within his arm and led her up the mossy stone steps into the vine-covered portico, and thence into the house, opening the door with his own hands.

"Babby!" he called, as soon as they found themselves in the cool front passage.

A big, fat, bright-eyed black woman of about forty years of age, clothed in a blue calico gown, with a white head handkerchief, neck handkerchief and apron, came from some back premises and stood smiling and waiting orders.

"This young lady, Miss Gertrude Haddon, is my ward, and has come to stay a few days with us. Take her up into the spare bedroom, which is to be hers, and make her as comfortable as you possibly can, and—let us have dinner as soon as is practicable," said the minister.

"Yes, marster; dinner will be on the table by the time that you and the young lady are ready to sit down, sir. Come, young missis," said the smiling Babby, as she led the way upstairs into a cool, shady little bed-chamber, of which it need only be said that the bare board floor was as smooth and white as ivory, and the lime-washed walls were as white as snow, while the curtains, chair-covers and bed-spreads, were of a light blue calico. Altogether it was a cool, clean, sweet room, full of repose.

The bright-eyed housekeeper, having shown Gertrude into this chamber of peace, hurried out to fetch a pitcher of fresh water, which she placed upon the wash-stand, saying:

"If only ole marse had dropped a hint as he was going to fetch you home long of him, young missis, all those things should a been here to hand; but we most in gen'al don't keep water in this spare room, 'cause it would only get stale, you see."

"Certainly, but I did not really need it. The roads are not the least dusty," replied Gertrude, as she took off her bonnet and mantle and laid them on the bed.

Nevertheless, she bathed her head and face in the fresh spring water, smoothed her hair, and finally she took a clean collar and a pair of clean cuffs from her little hand-bag, put them on, and then pronounced herself ready to go down stairs.

Babby showed her the way to a cozy dining-room in the corner of the house, whose east window looked out upon the Wilde and upon the opposite ridge, while its south window gave a view of the bend of the river toward the village of Wildeville.

Here they found the dinner already on the table, with Boykins in attendance.

"I fear that I have kept you waiting, dear Dr. Goodwin," said Gertrude, observing that the old pastor was seated in a shady corner of the room.

"Not at all, my dear girl, I have almost just entered. Sit down, my dear Gertrude. You will not find here the 'infinite variety' to which you have been accustomed at Greenwood and the Summit," said the good doctor, as he seated himself at the foot of the table.

"I am very sure, however, that it is all quite palatable and wholesome," answered Gertrude, courteously, as she unfolded her napkin.

It was indeed a simple, plain dinner of roast chickens, mashed potatoes and turnips, followed by a rice-pudding and custard, and finished by fine peaches and cream.

After dinner, the old pastor, begging his young ward to consider the whole house her own, and to go all over it at pleasure and select any book, or occupy herself in any way she desired, went and shut himself up in his study to write his sermon for the next Sunday morning.

Gertrude, thus set at liberty, went up to her room, to which her trunk had just been carried, and occupied herself in unpacking her very limited wardrobe, and placing the underclothing in the bureau drawers and hanging the dresses in the closet.

Then she took her black straw hat and went down stairs and out upon the grounds. She walked in the shrubbery for a little while, and then passed through the gate leading into the churchyard. She went to the grave of her beloved grandfather, which had just been sodded, and looked green and fresh.

"He is not here, but is risen," she quoted to herself, as she sat down upon the mound. Nevertheless, the sphere of death and desolation so enveloped her for a moment that she bent down her head, burst into tears, and wept bitterly. Then she wished for death.

"What have I to live for?" she sadly inquired of herself; 'I might die to-day and be rid of this fever of life, and no one, thank Heaven! no one would miss me or grieve for me, least of all would *he*," she murmured to herself, as her thoughts reverted to Gerald Fitzgerald.

At this moment, the sun that was sinking down in the west just touched the crest of Wild Cat Cliffs, and, before disappearing behind it, sent long quivering rays of light, like a smile and a benediction, over the whole scene. And, at the same instant, a little, fluffy, black-and-white kitten came purring and rubbing itself up against her dress.

"Oh, how selfish and egotistical I am, to be thinking so much of myself and falling into despair, while all the Lord's creation is so full of beauty and of love! That sunset beam is like a smile of the Lord," she murmured, as she turned her eyes with deep reverence toward the western sky. "Even this poor little thing is a better Christian than I am," she added, as she took up the little creature and set it upon her lap.

She sat there caressing the kitten, while she watched the sunset rays that were now tipping every tombstone with a crown or aurcole of golden light. She sat there until the sun sank out of sight behind the mountain, withdrawing all his rays after him.

"Come in 'fore de dew begins to fall, young missis," called a cheery voice from the house; and Gertrude looking up saw the bright face and round form of Babby Boykins in the door, under the vine-clad porch.

Gertrude nodded assent, picked up her kitten, arose and went into the house. Bobby Boykins was closing the shutters and lighting the lamps in the parlour, while Babby, his wife, was setting the tea-table. The old minister was nowhere visible.

"I'm downright glad ole marster have got a young lady to pour out de tea for him, honey, 'deed is I. It looked awful lonesome to see him settin' down day arter day all alone wid himself, at de table, honey, 'deed it did," said good-natured Babby.

"Yes, yer right dere, chile!" chimed in Bobby. "I offen used to pity ole marse Minister for bein' so dissolate and lone in de ole ages ob his life. I says to myse'f, "Boykins is black, but he ain't as dissolute as his ole marster, 'cause he's got his own Babby'!"

"G'long 'way from here, nigger! Who ax you to put your mouf in?" demanded Babby, pretending to be indignant, but very much pleased all the time.

Their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Goodwin, with his spectacles on his nose, and an open letter in his hand, reading as he came.

Babby immediately rolled herself out of the room to bring in the tea.

Boykins wheeled his master's large arm-chair up to the table.

Without taking his eyes off the page he was reading, Dr. Goodwin mechanically sank into the seat, and did not look up until he had finished the letter. Then he lifted up his eyes and saw Gertrude.

"I am afraid you have been dull to-day, dear," he said, kindly. "It must seem very lonely here to you who come from gay Greenwood."

"I prefer this place to Greenwood, dear Dr. Goodwin —not but that the whole family of Greenleaf were very, very good to me," said Gertrude, in all sincerity.

"You do? You do really, my child? I am very glad to hear you say so. By the way, my dear, to-morrow we are to have company to dinner. Would you mind sitting at the head of my table, as you used to do at your grandfather's?"

"Oh, no, dear sir; I should like to do that, or *anything* in the world, by which I could make myself useful," said Gertrude, with earnest sincerity.

"Whether it were to take the ferry-boat across the river in a midnight storm, or preside at a minister's dinner party, eh, my little girl?"

"Yes, sir," answered Gertrude, simply.

"Well, it will not be a dinner party, child; nor is it any very strange or formidable guest that is expected. You saw the letter that I was reading?"

"Yes, sir."

"That letter was from a friend of yours; no less than the ingenious gentleman, Mr. Benjamin Bowers, who writes that he will arrive to-morrow in time for dinner (Mr. Bowers always most judiciously arrives everywhere in time for dinner.) He tells me farther that he comes on business in which my ward, Miss Gertrude Haddon, is intimately interested."

"May I know what that business is?" inquired Gertrude.

"You might, if I could tell you, my dear; but the fact is, I do not myself know. However, he tells me also that he shall bring a friend with him, (another peculiarity of Mr. Bowers, he always brings a friend with him whenever he comes anywhere on business.")

"May we know, then, what friend he will bring with him?" inquired Gertrude, with a smile.

"Certainly; he will bring Colonel Fitzgerald," said the minister.

The smile died out of Gertrude's face.

"But here comes Babby with the tea, my dear child, so we will suspend our conversation for the present," said Dr. Goodwin, as Mrs. Boykins entered with a large and well laden tray, which she set down upon the table while she proceeded to arrange the edibles in order.

The rector's tea was very frugal—only good tea with cream and sugar, delicate biscuits, dainty cakes, fresh butter, and a little jelly.

Gertrude sat at the head of the table, and presided over the urn.

Bobby and Babby both waited, not that their services were at all needed, but because they liked to render them.

The conversation concerning the expected visitors was not resumed. After tea, when the service was cleared away, Dr. Goodwin took a book and seated himself to read. Gertrude drew a little roll of needlework from her pocket and began to sew. But soon she noticed that Dr. Goodwin often took off his spectacles and wiped them, and rubbed his eyes, and changed the position of the astral lamp, and gave other signs of being troubled with weak eyes or impaired vision.

"Dear Dr. Goodwin, do you ever let any one read aloud to you?" inquired Gertrude.

"I—I never had any one to do it, my dear," answered the old minister.

"Do you think you would like to have any one to read to you?"

"I never thought about it, my dear, but—yes, I think I should, if the reader were a good one."

"Will you try me? I like to read aloud. And my dear grandfather used to like to hear me sometimes," said Gertrude, modestly.

"Do you really like to read? You have a very sweet and pleasant voice, my dear. Yes, then, thanks; I should like you to do so," said Dr. Goodwin, passing the book to her, and taking off his spectacles, which he replaced in their leathern case and put into his pocket.

Gertrude took the book, expecting to find some volume of sermons or essays, but to her surprise and pleasure she found it to be a novel that she had long wished to read—"The Old Curiosity Shop." Her expressive countenance betrayed her feelings.

"You are astonished that I should be reading a novel, my dear?" smiled Dr. Goodwin.

"I am delighted," said Gertrude. "Where shall I begin?"

"Ah! you are 'delighted,' I dare say now, when you kindly offered to read for me you expected to read some dry discourse, did you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so."

"Where shall I begin, sir?"

"At the beginning. I had only read the preface. Begin at the beginning of the story. Yes, my child, in my hours of relaxation, I am as much of a novel-reader as your friend, Miss Sue. Go on now, dear; I am all attention."

Gertrude opened the book and began to read aloud, while the old man sank in his chair and shaded his eyes from the light with his hand.

So the evening passed happily with both, until ten o'clock, when the aged pastor told Gertrude to close her book, as that was the habitual hour for worship at the rectory.

At the same moment the two servants, Bobby and Babby Boykins entered the room, Bobby bearing the great family Bible reverently in his hands, and Babby bringing a little waiter on which stood two bedroom candles, in hers.

Bobby laid the Bible before his master.

Babby set the candles on the table.

A chapter in the Bible was read, the evening prayers were offered up, and then the family circle separated.

Gertrude bade her guardian good-night, and went up

to her "chamber of peace," and after her private devotions, went to bed; but not to sleep, one thought, half of joy, half of pain, kept her broad awake—the thought that on the next day she should see Gerald Fitzgerald; —see him whom she never had expected to see again in this life, except as the husband of Geraldine. As before, she lived over again the scenes in which he had appeared; she saw again his handsome, stately form; heard again his deep, full, caressing tones; and she knew not, guessed not the evil of indulging such thoughts. It was long after midnight ere she fell asleep.

She awoke about sunrise, and she immediately arose and dressed, for she knew that they kept early hours at the rectory.

She went downstairs just in time to be present at the morning prayers, after which breakfast was immediately served—a simple repast of coffee, dry toast, butter, broiled mackerel, and boiled eggs, with Bobby and Babby, as before, waiting on the table.

"Our friends will be here by ten o'clock, my dear, so we must take care to be ready to receive them," said the minister, as they left the breakfast-table together.

"*We*, Dr. Goodwin? Is it necessary for *me* to receive them with you?" inquired Gertrude.

"Doubly necessary, my dear; firstly, because you now occupy the position of the young mistress of the house, and of course you must welcome the guests of the house on their arrival; secondly, because their coming intimately concerns *you*, although in what manner I am utterly unable to conjecture. What *can* they have to say about you or to do with you, child?"

Gertrude shook her head as if tacitly giving it up.

"At all events, I wish you to be present with me to receive those gentlemen."

"I will do so, Dr. Goodwin," said Gertrude.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SURPRISE FOR GERTRUDE.

ABOUT eleven o'clock, the Greenwood carriage was seen approaching the rectory; but when it drew up before the door, only one person alighted from it, Mr. Ben Bowers, who, with the freedom of a man who made himself at home in the house of any acquaintance, opened the front door and walked straight on, and entered the drawing-room without waiting to be announced.

Dr. Goodwin arose and held out his hand to welcome him, saying:

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Bowers, but where is Colonel Fitzgerald? I understood from your note that we were to have the pleasure of the colonel's company with you."

"Well, so did I understand it: that is to say, I calculated on it; but I reckoned without my host. How do you do, Miss Haddon; I hope I find you well?" said Mr. Bowers, first answering Dr. Goodwin, whose offered hand he took and shook heartily, and then greeting Gertrude with a profound bow.

"Thanks: quite well," murmured the young girl, half rising, and with a slight bend of the head, returning his salutation. Then she sank back in her seat with feelings of mingled regret and relief.

"Then we are not to have the honour of Colonel Fitzgerald's company to dinner to-day?" said Dr. Goodwin.

"Well, no," replied Mr. Bowers as he dropped into the seat the doctor indicated to him.

"But how is that?" inquired Dr. Goodwin, resuming his own chair. "I am sure you wrote very positively about his coming."

"I know I did. I wanted him to come with me here

to-day, to give—a—the sanction of his presence to—a—the mission upon which—a—I have the honour to appear. But when I asked him to come, he excused himself, and when I urged him to come, he persisted in his refusal, although he never declined to accompany me anywhere before; but I knew why he would not do it," concluded Mr. Bowers, with a nod.

"Because he did not care to, I suppose," said Dr. Goodwin, smiling.

"Oh, yes, he did care; but the very fact of the matter was that he was afraid of Geraldine."

"Afraid of Geraldine! Colonel Fitzgerald!" exclaimed Dr. Goodwin, in surprise.

"Yes. Colonel Fitzgerald, the hero of Mexico, who would have charged a battery single-handed, without a moment's hesitation, is in mortal fear of his affianced bride, and dared not accompany me here lest his doing so should be displeasing to her ladyship."

"I can scarcely believe it," said the doctor, in surprise, while his young ward listened in breathless attention.

"You had better believe it, then. Talk of the subjection of women! Fiddlesticks! The proudest man that ever lived, the greatest hero that ever wore a sword, can be brought to the dust by a woman!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, in impatient disgust.

"Well, yes, perhaps, if she should be both young and beautiful, and if he should happen to be madly in love with her, and *not* married to her," laughed the doctor.

"Of course, *that;* for I don't suppose, for instance, that Gerald Fitzgerald could be so enslaved by—let us say, Miss Maxima Rowley."

The good doctor laughed aloud.

"I tell you, this is no laughing matter, Dr. Goodwin; it is most painfully serious. Gerald Fitzgerald's thraldom is most ignominious. That imperial young Geraldine is a tigress. The niggers call her Ing-uns, meaning onions. *I* call her nitro-glycerine, no less than that. And mind, I tell you, I don't believe that marriage will ever come off; and moreover, I don't think it ever *ought* to! there! I don't think there is a man on earth who could live—I will not say live happily—but live *at all*, with Geraldine Fitzgerald."

"I am very sorry to hear you say that, Mr. Bowers. But I think there can be no doubt of their eventual marriage. The day, you know, is fixed," said Dr. Goodwin, gravely.

"Yes, I know. It has been fixed and unfixed several times, I believe; but my own impression is, that at the present speaking, it is quite *un*fixed."

"Mr. Bowers," said Dr. Goodwin, seriously, "suppose we drop the private affairs of Colonel Fitzgerald, which does *not* concern us, and take up a topic that does? You said that you had business with me, that nearly affected the interests of my ward, Miss Haddon. Will you proceed with it?"

"Well, yes; I *have* something to say to you in which Miss Haddon is interested, certainly, but—a—it is not a subject that can be discussed in the presence of the young lady," said Ben Bowers, demurely.

Gertrude arose to leave the room.

"Keep your seat, my dear. Mr. Bowers, please to come with me to my study," said Dr. Goodwin, rising and moving toward the door.

Mr. Bowers followed his leader, and entered with him the little study on the opposite side of the entrance hall. When both were comfortably seated in arm-chairs at the green writing-table, Ben Bowers re-opened the conversation by saying:

"It is concerning your fair ward, indeed, that I have come to see you this morning, reverend sir."

"Very well, Mr. Bowers. I am very deeply interested in all that concerns my good little ward. Pray speak and explain yourself," said the doctor.

"I understand from Colonel Fitzgerald and Mr. Greenleaf, both, that by the will of the late Gabriel Haddon his adopted granddaughter inherits the whole of the Haddon Ferry estate. Is that so?"

"That is undoubtedly true. By the will of Gabriel Haddon Gertrude inherits Haddon's Ferry," gravely replied the doctor.

"A very fine property even now; a fortune some little time hence, if the railroad should be built along here."

"Yes," said the doctor, "it will then be a fortune."

"I also understood from Mr. Greenleaf, who was talking to Colonel Fitzgerald and myself on the subject, that

the late Gabriel Haddon made rather a remarkable clause in his will, namely, that his adopted granddaughter be free to marry when and whom she pleased, with or without the consent of her guardian," continued Mr. Bowers.

"That is true. Mr. Haddon in his own youth, and his young wife in hers, had suffered great persecutions from the hands of a cruel and despotic guardian, who had unreasonably opposed their marriage—persecutions which, in fact, caused the early and tragic death of the youthful bride, and wrecked the whole life of the young husband. Gabriel Haddon was resolved to give no man such power over the fate of his adopted child."

"But, it seems to me, that was paying *you* a very poor compliment, and giving you a very thankless task, to make you the guardian of a girl in her teens, and yet deprive you of authority over her in the most momentous event of her life."

"I do not think so. Gabriel Haddon felt the greatest confidence in Gertrude's good sense and good feeling. He wished to leave her *heart entirely free*."

"Yes, but, it seems to me, his own peculiar sorrows must have made him morbid on that particular subject; *or else* he would not have forgotten, as he seems to have done, that there are other ways of breaking a girl's heart besides that of opposing her marriage with the man of her choice! Why, Lord bless my soul alive, 'the man of her choice' may be the very fellow who *will* break her heart! and I'm blessed if I don't think he is the most likely person to do it, too!" said Mr. Bowers, nodding.

"That is very true. I have thought of that," replied the doctor, gravely.

"Suppose now, for example, some plausible scamp, having his eye upon the ferry, should gain the girl's affections, should marry her and squander all her property and bring her to beggary, *you* have no power to prevent such a catastrophe."

"None whatever; and yet, upon reflection, I do not know whether I should have such power or not," added the doctor, reflectively. "By the laws of Virginia, a girl under twenty-one years of age cannot marry without the consent of her parents or guardians. I do not really know whether that remarkable clause in the will of

Gabriel Haddon could be construed into a legal consent or not. I am no lawyer, Mr. Bowers."

"Well, now, see what an embarrassing position you are left in by the peculiar will of that morbid old man. If I were you I would petition the Orphan's Court to be invested with full powers over the ward."

"I shall do nothing of the sort, my friend. Gabriel Haddon's will is a sacred trust that I shall conscientiously discharge."

"But you must feel very anxious on account of the girl."

"Not at all; that is, I have not felt a shade of anxiety until this hour, when some of your remarks have occasioned me a little uneasiness—groundless uneasiness, I hope and believe it to be; for I too, as well as my old friend, have great confidence in Gertrude's good sense and good feelings. I feel very sure that, though I have no authority over her to control her actions, she would be guided by my counsel in all important matters."

"Even in the choice of a husband?" inquired Ben Bowers, jocosely.

"I—think so," rather hesitatingly answered the good man.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Oh-h-h!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, laughing aloud and rubbing his fat knees. "Oh-h-h! Dr. Goodwin, you are as innocent as Gabriel Haddon himself. The idea of a girl in love being guided by the counsels of an elder who had no authority over her! I beg your pardon, reverend sir. I hope you are not offended with me," added Mr. Bowers, upon reflection.

"Not in the least," answered the doctor, smiling; "but I am a little curious to know what has given rise to this sudden and active interest in the welfare of my young ward."

"Exactly; that is just what I am now coming at. The fact is, I take this deep interest in your ward because I love her. Yes, sir, I love her, and I wish to make her my wife!" exclaimed Ben Bowers, drawing himself up.

"Mr. Bowers!" cried the doctor, in the utmost amazement, staring at the speaker.

"Yes, sir," said Ben Bowers, majestically rising and

placing himself immediately before the doctor, throwing back his shoulders, expanding his chest, and sticking his thumbs into his vest pocket. "You see me, where I stand, a man of ancient lineage and unblemished character, in the prime of life and health, and of not unpleasant exterior. I love your ward, Miss Gertrude Haddon. I am willing to look over her want of rank and all that sort of thing, and I wish to make her my lawful wife. I have the honour to ask you, sir, for the hand of your ward, Miss Gertrude Haddon, in marriage. I know, of course, that there exists no actual necessity that I should ask your consent to pay my addresses to your ward; but I deem it fit and proper to do so," added the suitor, condescendingly.

"Mr. Bowers!" again exclaimed the astounded doctor.

"Well, reverend sir! Well! have you nothing more to say to me than that?" demanded the suitor, as he resumed his seat.

"You have not known Gertrude a month."

"Long enough to appreciate all her charms of person and character."

"But you are much too old for her—I beg your pardon, but you are forty-five."

"In the prime of life, sir! In the prime of life! Never felt younger since I was born than I do to-day."

"She is only fifteen; you are three times her age."

"'Let still the woman choose an elder than herself, so wears she to him,'" quoted the irrepressible Ben.

"And I think, besides, that you have paid your addresses to and been rejected by every girl, widow and old maid in Wilde county," said the unfeeling doctor.

"Curious, isn't it now? I don't believe such a fate ever attended any other man on the face of the earth; but I am afraid it is too true, as the fellow said when he was arraigned for chicken-stealing. However, that is neither here nor there, as the other fellow said when he couldn't find his hen either on the nest or the roost. The real point at issue is this—as the householder remarked to the plumber, in pointing out the end of his broken water-pipe—Dr. Goodwin, although even by your own admission, I was not obliged to ask your consent in order to marry your ward, yet I showed you respect in doing

so. Now, the question is, whether you will meet courtesy, by sanctioning my addresses to Miss Haddon," said the suitor.

"Your question, Mr. Bowers, requires some consideration," replied the minister.

"Oh, sir, life is too short to wait and waste in so much consideration, *although* the more you consider it, the better, I think, you will like the plan. Reflect! As she is situated now, she is liable to be cajoled and married by any young scapegrace who may take a fancy to marry her and spend her money. But give her to me, and I will take good care both of her and her little fortune."

"Do you propose to live at the ferry and run it in person?" inquired the doctor, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

"Well, no; that is scarcely the occupation for a gentleman—"

"Gabriel Haddon was a gentleman," said Dr. Goodwin, gravely.

"Oh, well, yes, I suppose in some sense he might be considered such," said Mr. Bowers, condescendingly.

"In every sense of the word, sir, my old friend, Mr. Haddon, was a gentleman," warmly persisted Dr. Goodwin.

"In birth, education and calling, I suppose," sarcastically observed Mr. Bowers; then, seeing the brow of the honest doctor darken ominously, and not wishing to offend him seriously, at this juncture, he hastened to add—"But we will not dispute about this. You, reverend sir, are, I know, imbued with the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and all that sort of thing—I am not. I had a great respect for the old ferryman, but no very great reverence for his calling. I should not like to succeed him in the management of the great flat boat, the long boat and the others."

"What, then, do you propose to do, Mr. Bowers?"

"To marry your ward, if she will have me."

"But about the ferry?"

"Oh! to hire a competent person to take charge of it for us."

"And live at ease yourself on the income derived from it?"

"I and my wife—yes, sir."

"I do not think the plan will do, Mr. Bowers."

"You do not think the plan will do? Why will it not do? Come, now, Dr. Goodwin. Consider what a relief it will be to your mind if that girl is once safely married to a man like me, who is able to protect her."

"I am able to protect her myself," said the doctor, quietly.

"Oh! of course, while you remain here. But your congregation is going to send you to Europe for your health this coming September, I hear?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"And then the girl will be left without your protection! But if she were married to me, you would feel that she was safe. What a relief it would be to your mind. You could then leave the country with a free and easy mind," persisted the suitor.

"You are very persevering, Mr. Bowers. But permit me to ask you one question."

"A hundred, if you like."

"Only one. If Miss Haddon were quite penniless, would you still be anxious to marry her?"

"Of course I would. It is the dear girl herself, and not her property, that I want!" exclaimed Ben Bowers, stoutly.

"That's well; for there is a possibility that she may be reduced to destitution," quietly returned the minister.

"Eh? What? Lord bless my soul alive! How is that?" inquired the suitor, aghast.

"By the turning up of a rightful heiress to the estate."

"But what difference can it make how many distant relatives that nobody ever heard of before should turn up, so long as the estate is left by will to Gertrude Haddon?" demanded the suitor, uneasily.

"This is no distant relation. It is the daughter of the late Gabriel Haddon by his wife Lilian."

"His wife Lilian? Why, it was said that *that* marriage was not legal, and, besides, I never heard of any child."

"It is now known for a certainty that the marriage was legal, and that a little girl was born of it who was unfortunately lost in London more than thirty years ago. Do you know my real reason for accepting the kind offer

of my congregation to send me abroad? It is not to benefit my health, that I do it, but to seize the opportunity to make a search for that missing woman."

"Whew-w-w! I wish you joy of your self-imposed task. Both parents dead—the child lost in London more than thirty years ago! Do you ever expect to find her?"

"If she is living, yes. I have a clue."

"Oh, well, even if she is, and you do find her, that will make no difference in Gertrude's fortune. The property was not entailed, and being left to her by the last will and testament of the late owner, it is *hers* to all intents and purposes, though twenty daughters should turn up," said Ben Bowers, confidently.

"Mr. Bowers! Do you imagine for a moment, that Gertrude Haddon would retain possession of the estate if the rightful heiress should be found? No! the very first act of her majority would be to give it up to the rightful owner?"

"Then I think she would be an uncommonly honest woman; but I do not think she will ever be put to the test. There isn't one chance in a million of your ever finding that woman. But you have not yet told me whether you will sanction my addresses to your ward."

"I do not sanction them, neither do I forbid them. I must leave my ward as free as her grandfather's will has left her. You will find Gertrude alone in the drawing-room. You are at liberty to go there and put the question to her."

"And—shall I say that I come to her from you?"

"Certainly not. I do not send you. I only give you leave to go on your own responsibility."

"But—in case she should hesitate, will you not counsel her to accept me for her husband?"

"Assuredly not. I must leave her entirely free to follow her own inclinations."

"But you will not counsel her *against* accepting my proposals?"

"I shall give her no counsel on the subject unless she asks it of me."

"But if she should ask it?"

"The request would be a confidential one, of course,

and I should respect her confidence," said the doctor with dignity.

"Ah! I see; I am not to expect any support from you, in my wooing," sighed Mr. Bowers.

"No; for, indeed, I cannot in honour give you any. But you are at liberty to go and try your own fortunes."

"Without even so much as a God-speed from you! Ah, well! here I go!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, as he arose and walked out of the room.

He found Gertrude sitting in the bay-window of the little drawing-room, busy over a piece of embroidery.

Now Mr. Bowers might have been, and probably was an ignoramus and an idiot in the art of love, but he was no novice in the practice of courtship, or craven in the venture of proposal. He drew a chair to the side of the silent girl, and after gazing at her work in silence for a few minutes, he burst forth with:

"I never could understand why you young ladies should take so much pleasure in punching holes in pieces of muslin, for the sake of sewing them up again."

"We do not sew them up again, Mr. Bowers; we work them around into a pattern. See, this a pattern of grapes and grape leaves," said Gertrude, good-humouredly spreading out her work upon her lap for the inspection of the curious old bachelor.

"Ay! grapes and grape leaves are they? And you punch round holes to represent the grapes, when it is well known that grapes are not hollow, but full. However, my dear young lady, I did not come here to talk to you about needlework, though I dare say it is a very interesting topic to you. Can you guess, my dear Miss Gertrude, what has brought me here to-day?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Bowers, I cannot."

"What! have you no suspicion of the nature of my errand?"

"None whatever, I assure you, Mr. Bowers," answered Gertrude, simply and truly.

"That is curious, too. My dear Miss Haddon," said the suitor, hitching his chair closer to hers, "you cannot fail to have noticed the great interest I have taken in you, from the very first moment I met you up to the present time."

"I know that you have been very kind to me, Mr.

Bowers, and indeed I thank you very much," said Gertrude, with unlucky earnestness, for she had not the slightest idea to what absurd extremity the words of her admirer tended.

"Don't thank me, my dear young lady, don't. You have a right to all my attentions. I deserve no thanks. I do but please myself in serving you!" fervently exclaimed the suitor, hitching his chair still closer to her side and attempting to take her hand.

Now, Gertrude's spirit was too meek to resent impertinence offered to herself, as her heart was too tender to wound the feelings of another. She drew her hand away so gently, so slowly and hesitatingly that her action really rather seemed to express encouragement than rebuke, and so the would-be lover seized it firmly in his own and pressed it with ardour to his lips.

Then, indeed, Gertrude suddenly snatched her hand away, blushing up to the very edges of her brown hair, as she exclaimed:

"Mr. Bowers, pray do not do that again. It is very wrong."

"Wrong, my angel? Why, wrong? I love you, I adore you, I worship you! I want to make you my wife. Come, now. Will you be my own little wife?" he whispered, trying to re-capture her hands. But she had folded her arms across her bosom and kept them so while she answered:

"You do me much honour, Mr. Bowers, but I—I never mean to marry—"

"Oh! nonsense, my dear, you will be sure to marry—and to marry me, too, I hope. Come, now—" and again he tried to take one of her hands; but she kept them both folded across her bosom and under her arms as she replied:

"I know that when a gentleman asks a young girl to marry him, he pays her the greatest compliment that it is in his power to pay. I appreciate the honour you would do me, Mr. Bowers, and I hope you will allow me to thank you for it, and to wish you a very good-morning." And with these words, Gertrude arose, and with her arms still folded, walked towards the door. Ben Bowers caught hold of her dress, exclaiming:

"Does this mean rejection, Miss Haddon?"

"It means that I thank you for the honour you would do me, but must positively decline it," said Gertrude, as she gently released her dress, bowed, and passed out of the room.

"Humph, humph, humph, humph! sold again and got the mitten! Well, I am used to it, and shan't be likely to sink under it," said the rejected suitor to himself, as he went up to the bell-rope and gave it a vigorous pull.

A servant—Bob Boykins—answered the summons.

"Have the horses put to the carriage immediately, Boykins. I am going back to Greenwood directly," said Mr. Bowers, in a peremptory manner.

"Indeed, sir! Master surely thought you would stay to dinner," exclaimed the man, in surprise.

"You must make my excuses to your master, and say that I have been called away suddenly."

"Won't I step into the study and let the master know as you are going away, sir?"

"By no means. Your master is writing his sermon, and must not be disturbed. Go put my horses to the carriage and bring it to the door."

"All right, sir; I'll do it," said Bob Boykins, leaving the room.

And in ten minutes more Mr. Ben Bowers re-entered his carriage and drove away from the rectory.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A MAD MARRIAGE.

WHEN the last sound of the carriage wheels, that carried away her rejected lover, died off in the distance, Gertrude Haddon returned to the drawing-room, reseated herself in the bay window and resumed her embroidery.

She did not meet her guardian again until she met him at the dinner-table. There was a merry twinkle in the doctor's eye, as he took his seat, and said:

"This is to be a tete-a-tete meal, after all poor Babby's

preparations! What have you done with our guest, pray? I left him in your care."

Gertrude attempted to reply, but only faltered and blushed up to her eyes instead.

"Ah, well! I have no doubt you did exactly the right thing with him, so it is all well, my love," said the good doctor, cheerfully, as he carved the roast goslin before him.

"You knew what he came for, sir?" inquired Gertrude, in a low voice.

"Oh, certainly! he did me the honour to apply to me first of all. I referred him to you as to the most interested party. And you have sent him off summarily, as I knew you would."

"I hope—I hope I did not hurt him," murmured Gertrude, almost involuntarily.

"Don't be vain, my little True. He won't die for love of you," said Dr. Goodwin, mischievously.

"I did not mean anything like that," muttered the young girl, crimsoning with confusion.

"I know you did not, my little True. You only meant to express the hope that the man's self-love was not wounded. Don't worry. His self-love is too tough and imperious to be pierced by anything that you could do to him. Besides, he is used to such rejections. He lives on them, and thrives on them. But we require some other substance. Come, let me help you to the wing of this young goose," said the doctor, as he placed the savory portion on Gertrude's plate.

"No, my dear little True," he continued, as soon as the servant had again left them alone. "No, I never get the least interested over Mr. Ben Bowers and his love affairs; but I will tell you what does trouble me very much, my child, and this is Gerald Fitzgerald's love affairs."

Gertrude's heart almost ceased its pulsations as she listened.

"If ever a 'course of true love' dashed itself over interminable falls and impracticable rapids, without any prospect of ever reaching a smooth, clear passage, it is *his* course!"

Gertrude's face paled and flushed and paled again; but she made no comment. The doctor continued:

"While you were entertaining your elderly suitor, in the drawing-room, I received a note from Royal Greenleaf, sent by a special messenger, and asking me to come and mediate between the estranged couple; for the marriage is broken off again."

"Broken off again!" echoed Gertrude, in a low tone.

"Yes, broken off again. I might as well speak plainly to you, my little Gertrude; for I know the reason why *you* left Greenleaf's, and commend the delicacy and dignity of your action in that matter; but no sooner had you left than Miss Fitzgerald chose to construe *your* voluntary departure into an act of submission on the part of her white slave, Gerald Fitzgerald. So she sent for him, and when he obeyed her summons she magnanimously forgave him for all the wrongs and insults she had heaped upon his head."

"And he—accepted—such forgiveness?" murmured Gertrude, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Of course. What can you expect? The man is madly in love with the beautiful fury, who loves no one but herself. And I tell you, my little Gertrude, that there is no jealousy so violent and unreasonable as the jealousy of self-love. It is *that* which is 'as cruel as the grave.'"

"But, since they were reconciled, how does it happen that the marriage is again broken off?" whispered Gertrude, scarcely above her breath.

"The witch, Patricia, seems to be at the bottom of the business now. She has made all the trouble. She has the fault of familiarity. She is as thoughtless as she is innocent. She has been making too free with her handsome cousin, who has the misfortune to be Geraldine's betrothed, and Geraldine has again flung her engagement ring into the face of her affianced lover, and ordered him to leave her presence forever."

"Oh, Dr. Goodwin!" breathed Gertrude, in a tone of grief and humiliation as deep as if the wrong and shame had been all her own.

"Yes, my love, it is so. If only Fitzgerald would have the manhood to take the jealous fury at her word and keep away from her forever! But no. She will get over her paroxysm of frenzy and send for him again. Yes, and again he will obey the summons and fly to her

feet, to receive her gracious forgiveness of all the dishonour she has done him. I know how it will all end."

"But, dear Mr. Goodwin, what can you do in the premises? You are both wise and good. What can you do to make a permanent peace between these two?" softly inquired Gertrude.

"To make a permanent peace between them? Nothing on earth, except to separate them for ever. I would do that if I could, and it would be the kindest act I could possibly perform for them both, if it were practicable; but I am afraid it is not."

"What, then, will you do?" again inquired Gertrude, with an interest she could not repress.

"Since I cannot do the only wise thing to be done, and separate them forever before they commit the suicidal crime of marriage, I will do nothing—certainly, nothing to reconcile them to each other again."

"But—please forgive me, Dr. Goodwin—are we not taught that 'Blessed are the peace-makers?'" whispered Gertrude—she could scarcely speak above a whisper.

"Yes, my dear," said the good doctor, reverently bending his head; "but to bring this incompatible young couple together in marriage would not be to make any real and permanent peace, but to make endless war. The marriage ought never to take place. If they separate now, with the understanding that the separation is to be a lasting one, they will, in time, forgive each other and be very good friends; but if they marry, I am sure that their marriage will not secure the happiness of Geraldine, and that it will assuredly ruin the life of Fitzgerald. I have written to Royal Greenleaf and expressed these sentiments as a reason why I decline to interfere. Nevertheless, my dear girl, I feel very anxious about the mad young pair, or rather about Fitzgerald, who is so madly, fatally in love with this young fury."

"I hope he will not humble himself again to Miss Fitzgerald," murmured Gertrude, involuntarily, almost inaudibly, but very earnestly, for she felt the humiliation of her hero more deeply than if it had been her own.

"Many a man, since Marc Antony's time, has lost the whole world for a woman; and I greatly fear—"

What he greatly feared was never uttered, for the

sound of girlish voices, with laughter and exclamations of surprise and delight, accompanied by the pattering of many light steps, was heard in the hall without, and was instantly followed by the opening of the door and the tumultuous entrance of Patricia Fitzgerald and her school friend, May Faire.

Dr. Goodwin repressed his great astonishment at their unexpected visit, and arose with old-fashioned courtesy to welcome them.

"Just in time, and hungry as a hound!" exclaimed Patricia, taking off her cap, and tossing it to the other end of the room, and drawing up a chair, seating herself at the table, saying, par parenthesis: "How do you do, Dr. Goodwin? How are you, Gertrude? Surprised to see us here, are you not? Bless you, *I* am sent from Greenwood in disgrace for flirting with cousin Gerald! I only did it to tease Geraldine, and punish her for treating *you* so abominably, Gertrude! But I am sorry for Gerald! *How* could he help it, if I *would* make love to him? But Lord help us! Geraldine didn't go for me, who well deserved her anger! She went for Gerald, who was not to blame! And didn't she give him fits! Whip, you horses! But here, I am talking at random, instead of delivering over mammy's letter!" concluded Pat, as she drew a note from her pocket and handed it to Dr. Goodwin.

The worthy doctor, who had in the meantime, welcomed May Faire, and handed her a chair, now took the letter with a bow; but before he opened it he rang the bell, and gave to Boykins, who answered it, the order:—"Get plates for these two young ladies, who have not yet dined."

As the servant left to obey the order, the doctor opened his letter. It proved to be from Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald, and it ran as follows:

"GREENWOOD, *Thursday*.

"MY DEAR DR. GOODWIN:—I take a liberty with you to-day that I should scarcely dare to take with any other friend. I send you, without previous warning, two young girls as visitors to your ward, and as trespassers on your hospitality. Will you pardon this intrusion, and take care of the children until after Tuesday next, which is

the third day that has been set for the marriage of the colonel and Miss Fitzgerald, and which I pray Heaven may pass off without a catastrophe. I understand that my brother wrote to you this morning. His letter will prepare you to comprehend the situation. I send off Patricia in expiation of what *has* been done, and send May Faire with her in apprehension of what *may* happen. Patricia will explain, if you have any questions to ask. You need not mind talking before 'May Faire'; she knows all about it. Geraldine's violence of temper has made herself and her jealousy a by-word in the family. On Tuesday next, please the fates, we will marry off our young firebrand; and when she is safely married and away, I shall feel as if a dangerous bomb-shell were removed from the premises.

Ever your friend, "DOROTHY FITZGERALD."

While the good doctor read and re-read this letter, Boykins had placed plates, knives, forks, spoons, napkins, and all else that was needed for the new-comers, upon the table, and Gertrude herself had set a chair for May Faire, and invited her to take it. Patricia, as we have seen, was already seated at the table, self-invited.

"It seems," said Dr. Goodwin, folding up his letter, returning it to his pocket, and resuming his seat at the table—"it seems by this note from Mrs. Fitzgerald that the colonel and Miss Geraldine are again reconciled."

"Oh, no, bless you!" exclaimed Pat, who was busy with a drumstick—"bless you, no! But mammy says she feels sure that Gerry will send for Fitz, and *pardon* him once more, now that I am slain and offered up as a burnt sacrifice to her jealousy."

"Hum!" said the doctor, dryly, as he re-commenced his interrupted dinner.

"You see," continued the irrepressible Pat, "how it was that I was sent away; and now what do you think was the reason why May Faire was sent with me? Give it up? Well, I'll tell you. At breakfast one morning she dropped her fork—(she's the awkwardest little wretch on the face of the earth.) So she dropped her fork, and Fitz, instead of waiting for a servant to do his duty, immediately arose, picked up that diabolical and mis-

chief-making implement, and gave it to her with a smile and a bow."

"A simple and natural act of politeness due from any gentleman to any lady," said the doctor.

"Yes, I know; but mammy thought it just as well not to have it encored. So she sent May into exile with me," said Pat, as she leaned back in her chair, as a sign that she had finished her dinner, and thought it time that her young companions had done the same.

A few moments later, the party adjourned to the drawing-room, where the doctor begged them to amuse themselves as they liked, and excuse him, as he had to make some calls.

During the evening Babby Boykins, with the freedom of an esteemed family servant, came into the drawing-room, to express her delight in seeing the lady visitors, which made the old house look like living again. Later in the evening the old woman showed her appreciation of their presence in a more substantial way, by getting them an excellent tea, with plenty of such cakes and sweetmeats as children and girls dote on.

The evening was finished with family prayers. Then Babby Boykins showed the two guests to a nice double-bedded chamber opposite to the room occupied by Gertrude.

The interval between that Thursday and the Tuesday of the expected wedding was passed pleasantly by every inmate of the rectory except Gertrude, whose soul, absorbed in one fatal love, could find no room for the enjoyments that made others happy.

On the Friday afternoon Royal Greenleaf came over, radiant with happiness and reporting "all serene" at Greenwood. When Pat had been sent from the house, Geraldine dispatched a flag of truce to Gerald, summoning him to a conference. He had come at his lady's call. She pardoned him again. They were reconciled once more, and the marriage was to come off on Tuesday morning. Royal Greenleaf had come over to announce this joyful news, and to bring affectionate greetings from all concerned, even from Geraldine, who was now in the most condescending mood, and had sent cordial notes to the doctor and to his three lady guests, supplementing Miss Sue Greenleaf's invitation to them to be present at

the wedding on Tuesday. Mrs. Doy Fitzgerald had written, saying she felt sure May Faire would not distress her friends by absenting herself from Greenwood on such an occasion, and begging that Patricia and Gertrude would ignore all unpleasantness, and honour the nuptials of the heiress with their presence, and so promote family harmony.

"Gert and May can do as they like, but as for Pat Fitz, if *I* know anything about that fellow, she'll not put herself in the way of being affronted a second time. She is not that sort of a beat!" exclaimed Patricia.

"Oh, well, there are four days left yet, and you will have plenty of time to 're-consider the resolution,' as the legislators say," replied Royal Greenleaf.

"Come now, Uncle Roy! You have said a deal about Gerry's radiance, and benignity, and complacency. You have grown enthusiastic on her happiness and good-humour; but how about Fitz? How does he look, Uncle Roy?" inquired Patricia.

Mr. Greenleaf hawed, hesitated; but being pressed, was constrained to confess that Gerald Fitzgerald looked worn, grave, as if he were not so happy in his reconciliation with his bethrothed, or not so sure of his happiness as he had seemed to be on former occasions.

"In fact," exclaimed Mr. Greenleaf, "he looks to me like a man who has been goaded into making a grim resolution and meant to keep it. If I were Geraldine, I would not risk breaking with him once more—it would be once too often. But there can be no danger now. The day is so near at hand. So, dear girls, I shall expect you all to forget and forgive, and for the sake of family unity, present yourselves at Greenwood early on Tuesday morning," said Mr. Greenleaf, as he bade them good-by.

At first, the three girls declared that they would not go to the colonel and Miss Fitzgerald's wedding. Pat swore she would see Fitz and Gerry pickled before she would demean herself by going; May Faire said that she should like much to go, but should not think of doing so without her friend Patricia; Gertrude said nothing, until pressed for an opinion; then she declared that she never had thought of going, under any circumstances. So the matter rested for that night.

But what young girl's dignified resolution can hold out against the attraction of a wedding to which she is invited? Not Patricia Fitzgerald's certainly.

Pat, who had been the most emphatic in declaring her determination never, never to attend the marriage ceremony of Colonel and Miss Fitzgerald, was the very first to give in. But fortunately for her piece of mind, Pat was never haunted by what a sage has termed "the bugbear of narrow minds—consistency." When Pat made a resolution she meant to keep it. But when she got tired of keeping it she broke it. Behold all.

On Saturday afternoon Pat began to say that after all she *should* like to see how the bride would look, and hear what the bridegroom would say, and that, indeed, it would be a great pity to disappoint May Faire, who had come all the way from Cave Court to be present at the wedding, and who could not go without Patricia. In a word Pat decided to pocket her pride and go to the wedding, and May Faire joyfully jumped to accompany her.

And Gertrude? Ah! Heaven only knows what wild, mad hopes had smouldered in the depths of her heart during these troublous days, when Gerald and Geraldine were continually off and on, on and off, upon the marriage question; when every one disapproved the marriage and predicted that it would finally be broken forever, as it ought to be for the best interests of all concerned.

Did she, almost unconsciously, hope that when the ill-omened engagement should be finally and forever annulled between the ill-matched pair—after years should have passed, perhaps—that Gerald Fitzgerald being free might possibly—*possibly*—look on her and love her?

The very thought would have caught away her breath for joy. Her idea of heavenly delight was—to be loved by Gerald Fitzgerald, and to live with him forever; to have the privilege of being always near him, to see him, to hear him, to wait on him, to work for him, to suffer for him; for no toil, no suffering endured for him, but would have been transmuted by the power of love into Heavenly joy. How could his betrothed bride behave to him as Geraldine had done. To Gertrude's worshipping heart, such conduct seemed the most grievous rebellion, the most awful blasphemy and sacrilege, and she wondered equally at the insanity of the woman and

the majestic patience of the man. She wondered and she worshipped, bowing down her whole soul before him. Nor was this any form of idolatry, in that young religious heart. Her adoration of the stately man who had won that heart was so pure from every earthly taint of selfishness, that it was one in her love and worship of the Lord.

Yes, Gertrude's love was pure from earthly stain; but, ah, it was not free from earthly pain! As the fatal wedding day drew near, the thought of Fitzgerald's marriage with Geraldine grew more and more agonizing and insufferable!

It was not only that this marriage must forbid her ever to think of him as she had thought, and must compel her to maintain a cruel struggle in her own heart to eject his memory; it was not either that this marriage would separate him utterly from her, whose whole soul was filled with adoration of him, and who felt, in some occult way, by inspiration or intuition, that she belonged to him forever, and could never, in all eternity, belong to any one else! It was not all this only that overwhelmed her with despair; it was the conviction she felt that this marriage with the beautiful but jealous fury must desolate his life!

Gertrude could think of nothing but the impending marriage, and could not reconcile herself to the thought. She could not sleep, she could not eat. She lost flesh and strength daily, and grew pale and thin; and the dark eyes seemed heavier and sadder than ever before.

She had decided not to go to the wedding; but on the Monday night preceding the appointed day, as she lay feverish and sleepless on her bed, tossing restlessly from side to side, gazing out through the window at the foot of her bedstead—out on the headstones in the churchyard, folding her hands, closing her eyes, and praying for Gerald Fitzgerald that he might be preserved from all evil, and that she might have strength to bear her henceforth lonely life and grace to do her duty in it, suddenly a desire took possession of her soul—a desire to see him only once more—only once more to hear his voice, to meet his gaze, to clasp his hand, and then—since it must be so—to see him no more on earth.

Then she resolved to go to the wedding to see him

again for the last time, if only to see him in the act of plighting his troth to Geraldine, to bind him to her forever. Gertrude arose early to prepare for the wedding. It was a glorious day in September; the sky was without a cloud, the bright waters untroubled by a ripple.

Gertrude was wearing mourning for her grandfather, but she left it off, and put on a white organdie dress, with rose-coloured ribbons on her bosom, at her wrists, and in her hair.

When she was dressed, she tapped at the door of Patricia's room, which was opposite to hers, across the hall.

Pat came, half-dressed, to open the door.

"I shall go with you to Greenwood to-day," she said.

"Sensible fellow! I thought you would. Now go down, and hurry Babby Boykins with the breakfast. We must be off in half an hour, sharp!" said Patricia, closing the door.

Gertrude went down, but found no occasion to hurry Babby. The breakfast was waiting. The carriage from Greenwood had arrived, and was waiting to convey the wedding guests to the same place. Dr. Goodwin was walking up and down the terrace in front of the house, eager as a boy to be off to the wedding. In truth, Pat and May were the only laggards. But they soon came hurrying down-stairs, dressed for the marriage festival—Pat in a pink organdie, and May in a blue barège.

Babby Boykins put the breakfast on the table, and the party gathered around it. Dr. Goodwin said grace, and they all ate rather too fast for the good of their digestion. The breakfast over, the young people flew up-stairs to put on their bonnets, but they did not hurry over *that* business.

Gertrude soon tied on her chip hat with its straw trimming, took a Paisley shawl over her arm and went down-stairs. As she passed the upper hall window, she caught a glimpse of a horse and his rider thundering down the mountain road leading to the rectory. The horse was in a foam, his black flanks bespattered with flakes. The rider's form seemed familiar, and the glimpse of it seemed a thrill through the frame of Gertrude.

She went down the stairs and entered the parlour, and

sat down to wait, expecting, fearing—she knew not what.

The parlour was deserted. She had scarcely perceived this and seated herself, when she heard the house-door thrown open, hurried footsteps enter the hall, and peremptory tones demanding:

"Is Miss Haddon here?" And—

"Yes, sir," from the voice of Boykins.

"In what part of the house?"

"In the parlour, sir."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir. Shall I show you in?"

"No, I can find my way there."

Gertrude heard this; and while her heart seemed to stop in its pulsations, the door was thrown open and Gerald Fitzgerald strode into the room. He wore his wedding-dress, the full dress of a gentleman of this age; but his face was pale and grim; his lips were so firmly closed under his mustache, that his chin seemed to protrude: his deep set eyes gleamed like stiletto points; his manner showed emotion forcibly repressed. Without any ordinary greeting he stepped to the side of Gertrude, and taking her hand, and gazing into her soft eyes, said, hurriedly:

"Child, if you should see me on the brink of a precipice, and this little hand could save me, would you be afraid to hold it out to me?"

"No, no," cried Gertrude, thrilled through every nerve of her frame, carried beyond herself, and never moving her meek, brown eyes from the steady gaze of those eager, strong, dark orbs that held them fast.

"*Would* you hold out your hand to save me?"

"Yes, yes—I would!"

"But if I should pull you down?"

"I could perish with you!"

"Gertrude, I am on the brink of hell! You can save me, if you *dare* to do it!"

"I will—I will! Oh, tell me how?"

"Be my wife within an hour!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

GERTRUDE'S SACRIFICE.

GERTRUDE gazed at Fitzgerald in amazement. She had heard all his words, and she understood their meaning; yet she could neither believe in her own hearing, or credit her own understanding.

Standing before her, sad, pale and firm, he held her little hands with a strong grasp, and held her meek eyes riveted on his eyes by his gaze.

"Do you hear me, my child? Do you comprehend what I say to you?" he inquired, gazing intently into the depths of those dark eyes. "I tell you that at this moment I am a free man, but I may be in the next an exile or a slave unless you save me. I am on the brink of a gulf of perdition, from which only your small hand can snatch me. Will you dare to give me this little hand, Gertrude? Will you dare to be my wife, and that within this hour?"

"I will dare to do whatever you wish. I only want to do your will," she answered, in a low voice.

She asked no questions, expressed no doubts, made no conditions with him who was to be her husband. Her faith in him was as strong as her love for him was pure, and both were boundless! Then and there, at his asking, she offered up her heart a pure sacrifice.

He bent his head down lower towards her earnest face, he gazed deeper into the depths of her brown eyes, and he repeated his question:

"Will you really be my wife within an hour, Gertrude?"

"Yes, if you will," she answered softly, steadily.

"No matter what any one may say in opposition to your doing so?" he asked, tightening his clasp upon her hands.

"'No matter what any one may say in opposition to my doing so,'" she solemnly replied, as if repeating the words of some ritual.

"And you will not fear to do this, my sweet child?" he tenderly, pityingly inquired.

"I will not fear—by your side," said Gertrude, in a low tone.

"Then you are, indeed, my own! Heaven bless you, sweet girl; and, oh, may heaven help me to be true to you, and to make you happy!" he fervently breathed, as he drew her to his bosom and pressed a kiss upon her pure brow.

"Well! upon my WORD—AND HONOUR!"

This exclamation came from Pat Fitzgerald, who had just opened the door and now stood on the threshold aghast.

Gerald Fitzgerald did not for a moment lose his self-possession. He turned and drew the hand of his blushing companion within his arm, and holding it protectingly there, said:

"Good morning, my merry cousin. Can you tell me where I shall find Dr. Goodwin?"

"Yes, sir!" flashed Pat. "You can find him trotting up and down the front passage, fretting and fuming because it is growing late and he cannot get his young people all together to go to Greenwood to your wedding! —there is where you will find him if you care to look for him. But will *you* tell me what in the old Scratch has brought you here on this, your marriage-morning, when you ought to be at Greenwood?"

"I will tell Dr. Goodwin, my dear girl! and that will be more to the purpose," said Gerald Fitzgerald, with a smile.

"Ah! but who will tell Geraldine of this visit? When she hears it, I would not be in your boots for a fast horse!" exclaimed Pat, maliciously.

Colonel Fitzgerald did not reply; but with Gertrude's hand held caressingly within his arm, he moved towards the door, but was prevented from leaving the room by the sudden entrance of Dr. Goodwin, with little May Faire on his arm.

"Well, now, I have got all three of you young Flibbertigibbets together. I suppose we may start— What!

you here, Colonel Fitzgerald! For Heaven's sake, what has happened?" exclaimed the doctor, in dismay, at discovering the bridegroom on his wedding-day so far from the neighbourhood of his bride. "For Heaven's sake, what can have happened?"

"Nothing has happened, my dear Doctor, but that might have been expected. The marriage engagement heretofore existing between Miss Fitzgerald and myself was yesterday broken off by mutual agreement," replied Gerald Fitzgerald, in a voice steadied only by his own strong will.

"Hump! humph! humph!" grunted the good doctor, slowly sinking into his old arm-chair and quite getting over his hurry to be off. "Yes, it might have been expected. Yes, certainly, it might have been expected. But you must have become accustomed to that sort of thing by this time. And now! Have you ridden over here this morning to ask me to mediate? Because, if you have, my boy, I won't do it. I would not do it the last time, and I won't do it this time. A pair, let me tell you, who are always quarrelling before marriage, will never agree afterwards. The best thing you and Geraldine could do would be to separate forever."

"I think so too, sir, and—"

"Only you won't do it."

"I was about to add, sir, that the separation is now a final one."

"Oh, yes, final until Geraldine writes you a note or sends you a message, when you will go back to her to have the same trouble repeated again and again—how many times? Is this misery to last forever, Gerald? As your oldest living friend, I ask you."

"What would you have me do, sir?" shrewdly inquired the colonel.

"You say that your engagement with Geraldine Fitzgerald is broken off by mutual consent?" said the doctor.

"Yes, sir."

"And you are not in honour bound to her."

"No, sir, I am not."

"Then enlist for a soldier; ship yourself for a sailor. Go on an exploring expedition. Find the North Pole, or the source of the Nile. Put as many leagues of sea and

land as possible between you and the beautiful enchantress who rules and ruins your life," said the good minister, with emphatic earnestness.

"I shall do better than that, sir. I shall put a worthier line between my heart and that unworthy slavery," gravely replied Gerald Fitzgerald, as he pressed the little hand of Gertrude and raised it to his lips.

"Why, what do you mean by *that*, Gerald? And what on the face of the earth are you doing with my ward?" exclaimed Dr. Goodwin, who seemed to be awakened for the first time to the consciousness that during all this conversation Gertrude had stood by the side of Gerald Fitzgerald, with her hand resting on his left arm and clasped in his right hand.

"I have just asked Miss Haddon to be my wife, and she has made me very happy by her consent," said Colonel Fitzgerald, with grave dignity, as he looked proudly and fondly down on the shy, earnest girl who stood by his side.

"Eh? What—what—what? Bless my soul alive! This cannot be true!" exclaimed the astounded doctor.

"And I bring her to you to ask your blessing on our union," continued Colonel Fitzgerald, ignoring the interruption.

"Gerald, you must be raving mad! This is impossible—inconceivable! That beautiful fury must have at last succeeded in unseating your reason!" exclaimed the doctor.

"No; on the contrary, she has brought me at length to my senses. And I have resolved to put an impassable barrier between me and herself!"

"You would put an impassable barrier between you and herself. You would make that poor girl's heart the barrier," indignantly exclaimed Dr. Goodwin.

"This sweet girl has given me her heart, and I will shield it with my own. I will devote my life to her happiness," calmly replied Fitzgerald, as he carried her hand to his lips.

"Gertrude, what have you to say to all this?" demanded the doctor, starting up from his chair and beginning to walk about the room. "Is this true? Have you consented to marry Gerald Fitzgerald?"

Gertrude lifted her dark eyes to her destined husband's face, with a look of self-forgetting, worshipping love, and then answered his question. "Yes, it is true."

"You would give yourself to this rejected bridegroom, fresh from his bride's repulsion?" almost scornfully demanded the doctor.

"Yes, since he wants to have me," meekly but steadily replied the girl.

"Do you love Gerald Fitzgerald, you poor, unhappy child, that you would throw your young heart away on a disappointed, embittered, revengeful man, who marries you in wrath, not in love! (I beg your pardon, Gerald, but this is the truth, and I must tell her so,") said the good doctor, pausing and standing before the couple.

"Oh, by all means; put the case to her strongly—as strongly as you can! She will not forsake me; she has told me so!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, looking confidently down on the brown eyes that were again upturned in such deep reverence to his.

"Gertrude, my child, tell me truly: Do you love Gerald Fitzgerald?" inquired the minister.

"Yes, I love him," said Gertrude, meekly.

"And how long since, you poor child?"

"Ever since I first saw him. I could not help it, and indeed I did not want to help it," she answered, in a low, timid, yet earnest manner.

"And you would marry him?"

"Yes."

"But, you poor, unhappy girl, he does not love you. He does not even pretend to love. He has not even told you so. Why do you consent to be his wife?" inquired the doctor, as the tears arose to his honest eyes. "Oh, child, why do you marry him?"

Again Gertrude, clinging on Fitzgerald's arm, lifted her meek, appealing brown eyes to his face ere she answered her guardian.

"I marry him because he *wills* me to marry him, and I love to do his will!"

"Are you answered, reverned sir?" inquired Colonel Fitzgerald, triumphantly. Then turning to Gertrude, he said:

"Fear nothing, sweet child. I will soon show them all whether I love you."

"When is this mad marriage to come off?" inquired Dr. Goodwin.

"Within this hour. And half of it has already passed away. Dr. Goodwin, here is our marriage license, taken out by me this morning from the Wildeville Register's office. Will you lead the way to the church and pronounce the marriage benediction upon us?" gravely inquired Fitzgerald.

"Stay, stay, stay! we are not all lunatics together! You must have felt reasonably sure of winning this young girl's consent to have got your license out!" said Dr. Goodwin.

"No, I did not. I only felt that there might be a chance for me. It cost but little to take out the license, and so I took it out to save time before coming here. Now, Dr. Goodwin, thirty-five minutes of the hour have passed."

"Gertrude, my dear, do you really wish to marry this gentleman so suddenly?" questioned the doctor.

"Yes, sir, since he wills it," meekly replied the girl.

"Gertrude, if I had the power to prevent or defer this marriage, I would exercise it in your interests to-day; but I have not! Your grandfather's unwise will has made it possible for you to marry whensoever and whomsoever you will. Yet, Gertrude, as your best friend, I would counsel you to beware of this hasty, reckless marriage—this mad marriage contracted on one side in wrath and for revenge, on the other an inordinate affection and blind idolatry. Let me implore you to pause before you take this irrevocable step," pleaded the doctor.

"Dear guardian, I have promised, and I will keep my promise," said the girl.

"Fitzgerald, I adjure you as a man of honour and a gentleman to release her from her promise," urged Dr. Goodwin.

"I must decline to do so, sir!" replied Fitzgerald.

"Guardian, I do not wish to be released from my promise," added Gertrude, loyally.

"Oh, foolish child! I would that I had the power to stop this marriage. I would that your grandfather had not made such an unwise will, leaving you to your own devices."

"Oh, how I thank and bless the memory of my dear

grandfather that he left me free! free to give my heart away to whom I choose!" murmured Gertrude.

"Free to break it upon a rock, you mean, poor child!" sighed the doctor.

"Sir, but twenty minutes of the hour in which Gertrude promised to marry me, are left," suggested Fitzgerald.

"Do you persist in throwing yourself away upon this unresponsive man, poor child?" inquired the minister.

"I persist in giving myself to him because he wills to have me," answered Gertrude, in an earnest tone.

"Suppose I should refuse to perform the marriage ceremony between you, what should you do then?"

Gertrude lifted her large dark eyes to Fitzgerald's face, and then replied to her guardian:

"I would go with him wherever he should wish to take me, to be married."

"I should take her to Wildeville and marry her there."

"Heaven help her! Ah, since I have no power to prevent this marriage, I must take precautions to have it legally performed. Gerald Fitzgerald, Gertrude Haddon, follow me to the church. You two ladies come with us. You will be wanted as witnesses," said the rector, leading the way from the parlour, attended by the bridal pair.

"May Faire!" exclaimed Patricia Fitzgerald—"are you sleeping with me? Pinch me *hard*—hard as you can! I never was so sound asleep in all my life, and never dreamed such a devil of a dream! I am dreaming that Gertrude Haddon is going off to be married to Gerry Fitz! Oh, you know it *must* be a dream, such an absurd thing as that. *I* know it is a dream. But, oh, do wake me up! Pinch me hard as ever you can! Stick a pin into me up to the head! Wake me up at any price before I dream that they are really married!"

"You are not asleep or dreaming, Patricia," answered the sober-minded fairy. "You are wide awake, and this strange thing is really going to happen, though I can scarcely believe it. Come, Patricia, Dr. Goodwin will be waiting."

"Ah! I see how it is. My bedfellow is too sound asleep herself to wake. I must keep on dreaming and acting in a dream," sighed Patricia.

"Come, Patricia, *indeed* Dr. Goodwin will be waiting for us," urged the little blonde.

"All right. I mean all wrong. I will dream I am going with you to see Gertrude married to Gerald Fitzgerald; but what an absurd dream it is! I think it must be a nightmare. What a horrid heavy supper I must have eaten to be dreaming this way!"

"*O-h-h-h*, Patricia! *Do* come along," pleaded May Faire.

"All wrong. I'm dreaming I'm coming, since I can't wake up," answered Pat, drawing the arm of the fairy in her own and walking out of the parlour.

They took the path leading through the gate in the wall dividing them from the churchyard, and passing between the tombstones, went to the front door of the church and entered.

The inside of the edifice wore that bare and deserted look too common to our undecorated Protestant churches in the absence of the congregation.

The two girls passing up the aisle, noticed four persons at the altar.

Within the chancel stood the rector, in his surplice. Before him stood Gerald Fitzgerald and Gertrude Haddon. Behind them was old Luke Marcy, the sexton.

The rector seeing the entrance of the two girls, beckoned them to approach. They joined the group at the altar, Patricia placing herself on the left of Gertrude, and Mary on the left of Patricia.

Then the ceremony commenced, the rector reading from his prayer-book the words of the opening exhortation.

"Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together here, in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman, in holy matrimony—" and so forth. The exordium is familiar to most of our readers. The reading went on steadily on the part of the minister, and was listened to with attention and reverence until the reader came to these grave words:

"If any man know just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak—"

Here the minister made the usual pause, a matter of form, since not once in a million of cases does any one "speak" to forbid the marriage. But as the voice of the reader ceased, the open doorway of the church was

darkened by the entrance of a negro man, who came up the aisle and stood near the bridal party, waiting, and holding his hat in one hand and a sealed letter in the other.

"It is Goliah, from Greenwood," whispered Patricia to May Faire. "My dream is getting worse and worse. I shall cry out presently."

The minister regarded the intruder in uneasiness, and he paused longer than usual, as in expectation of hearing something from this messenger, whom he dared not interrupt the solemn ritual to question.

"Reverend sir, will you be good enough to go on with the ceremony?" said Colonel Fitzgerald.

The minister cast his eyes down upon his book, and resumed his reading in these words of lawful adjuration:

"'I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together, ye do now confess it; for be ye well assured that if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's Word doth allow, THEIR MARRIAGE IS NOT LAWFUL.'"

Dr. Goodwin pronounced these last words with the most solemn emphasis. But they found no echo in the hearts of those to whom they were addressed.

Gerald Fitzgerald, with all the wilfulness of his reckless mood, was taking to himself this young bride, and she with all the religious fervour of her nature, with the joyful assent of her whole being, was giving herself away to her husband.

The minister suppressed a groan and continued the ceremony. When he asked the momentous question:

"Gerald, will thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?" etc., the bridegroom's response came forth, stern, emphatic—more expressive of determination than affection: "I WILL!"

When the like question was put to the bride—

"Gertrude, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?" and so on, no one except the bridegroom and the minister, heard her voice; but, oh, what a depth of devotion, what a completeness of self-surrender, breathed in her low-toned response: "I will."

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" read the minister.

"Me!" squeaked the old sexton, who had been brought hither for this duty. He set his cane up against a pew, pushed to the front, took the hand of the bride, placed it in that of the bridegroom, and backed out again.

"My dream is growing more horrible every instant," whispered Patricia to her companion. "I have just dreamt that we came through the church-yard to the wedding, and I am dreaming that the sexton is giving the bride away, and I shall dream of taking off her glove so that Gerry Fitz may place the wedding-ring upon her finger. There! I told you so!"

This last exclamation was caused by a sign from the minister, in obedience to which Patricia, as bride-maid, drew off the lavender kid glove of the bride.

And then the ring was placed on the bride's finger by the bridegroom, who, holding it there, repeated after the minister the final and most sacred marriage vow that bound Gerald and Gertrude together in a union that could only be broken by death or by crime.

The last prayer was said; the last benediction was given; the last awful adjuration pronounced:

"THOSE WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER."

Gerald Fitzgerald stooped to salute his bride, and met her meek eyes upturned to his face, with the beaming look of a child who has done something to please one whom she profoundly loves and reverences; her eyes full of a soft radiance—the radiance of an angel's pure delight.

"What a mere baby she is!" he said to himself—"so pleased at the novelty and importance of being married! Well, poor little one, I must try to make you so content that you may never repent this reckless 'leap in the dark,'" he added, with a sigh, as he gave her the kiss that custom demanded. But the three friends who had witnessed the marriage were now pressing forward to offer congratulations.

"Colonel Fitzgerald, you have 'married in haste.' Still, it rests with yourself to decide whether you will ever have cause to 'repent at leisure.' In this trusting

girl, whether you know it or not, you have secured a treasure. I wish you both all the happiness I know she so well deserves," said Dr. Goodwin, as he shook hands with the newly-wedded pair.

"I thank you, reverend sir, in the name of Mrs. Fitzgerald and myself," replied the bridegroom with a bow.

"Gertrude, old chap," said Patricia, coming forward and rubbing her eyes—"I am conscious that this is all a dream, but I can't help it! I have been dreaming the most grotesque things about you—dreaming that we walked through a church-yard to see you married to Gerry Fitz, my warlike cousin, Gerry Fitz, and that the old sexton gave you away! Whew! what a 'gwobious' dream! And now I am dreaming that I am wishing you joy. Well! sleeping or waking, old fellow, I *do* wish you joy with all my heart!" added Pat, giving the bride a salute.

"Colonel and Mrs. Fitzgerald, I wish you both much happiness and prosperity," said May Faire, offering first her hand to the bridegroom and then her lips to the bride, who both responded in kind.

"And now, sir and madam, I hope you will not disdain an old man's good wishes, seeing he was had up here to take part in these solemnities," said the sexton.

"Many thanks, Marcy, from Mrs. Fitzgerald and myself for your kind wishes and valuable services. Will you receive this trifle in acknowledgment of them?" said Colonel Fitzgerald, as he slipped a roll of notes into the sexton's hands. The old man bowed, and backed out again.

"We will now adjourn to the vestry and register our names," said the rector.

"Beg pardon, marse minister," said the dark intruder, who had been utterly forgotten; "I beg a t'ousand pardons; but here I has been a-standin' wid dis letter in my hands a-waitin' for de chance to 'liver it to its right owner, which, now, if you please, I would like for to do it."

"Well, deliver it, then. Who is the right owner?" demanded Dr. Goodwin.

"Marse Colonel Geral' Fitzger'l', sar, which I dunno, nudder, as it's any use to 'liver ob it now, sar."

"If the letter is for me, it can wait my leisure," said

Gerald Fitzgerald. "Come, reverend, sir, if you please, we will go into the vestry and complete this business, by registering this marriage. We can attend to our dark friend afterwards," he added, as he drew the arm of his bride through his own and led the way into the vestry, followed by the rector, the sexton, the two witnesses, and by the negro messenger. The parish register was opened, and the names of the bridegroom, bride, rector, and witnesses, with the residences of each, and the day of the month and year were duly signed and recorded.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GERALDINE'S APPEAL.

WHEN the party turned to leave the vestry, they were confronted by the black giant, Goliah, from Greenwood, who still persistently held up the letter he brought.

"Ah, yes, I will look at that now," said Gerald Fitzgerald, taking the letter from the messenger's hand.

The other individuals of the party seated themselves, while Colonel Fitzgerald opened and read the letter. It was without date or signature, but it was from Greenwood, and it was written by Geraldine, wildly, passionately, almost incoherently:

"Oh, Gerald, my own, come back to me, for the love of Heaven! I never meant to drive you from me. I never meant to speak the wild, false, wicked, *fatal* words that so outraged your manhood. It was not *I*, Gerald, but some devil that had possession of me. Oh, you know *I* could never have spoken to you so—never have driven you away from me on the eve of our wedding-day, for I love you, Gerald! And you know it. I have loved you ever since I was a child of five years old, and you a youth of glorious beauty, my childish ideal of all that was divine in the image of the Creator—when your father told me you were to be my husband, and you put the first betrothal ring upon my finger and called me your own,

"It was then that you took me 'for better, for worse,' and in all my life I never dreamed of such a thing as inconstancy to you. For me there lived but one man on the earth—he was my betrothed husband, my king and my lord. But giving you my whole heart, I exacted as much. As for me, no, no other man lives; so for you it fills me with madness to think that any other woman should exist. Oh, why did you sit beside Horatia Rowley so long yesterday evening, quoting Byron's poetry to her, allowing her to look into your eyes as she did, to speak to you in the tone she did, driving me mad with jealousy, opening my spirit to the influx of all the hells?

"I have the Fitzgeralds' temper—oh, let me say I have the Fitzgeralds' familiar devil! And when I grow jealous that devil takes possession of me. I am no longer in myself. It is not I who utter wild, false, wicked, fatal words. It is not I who drive you with insults from my presence—not I, oh, Gerald! But the devil that has obtained transient possession of me; for when he has left me I could rend my hair and my clothes, in self-abhorrence and despair for all that he has made me say and do. For I love you, Gerald! And you love me, and *I* know it! You may fly from me to the uttermost parts of the earth, but you will carry with you the assurance that we love each other utterly! That we shall love each other as long as we both shall live!

"But if you leave me, Gerald, I feel that I shall not live! Oh, come back to me, Gerald, and let us be happy in each other again? I would promise, I would gladly *vow*, never to give way to such jealous fury again; but terrible experience has taught me that such promises would be vain—such vows would be broken. I might as well promise never to have an ague again, as never to have an outbreak of temper. I cannot help one more than I can help the other.

"But oh, Gerald, *you* made me a promise, which you *can* keep, if you will. It was on the day of your dear father's funeral, after we had returned from laying his remains in the vault, when we were reconciled to each other, and I pleaded with you, and you promised me *always* to bear with my unhappy temper, since you knew that I loved you, through all.

"This was your promise to me, Gerald, and it gave me peace; for I said to myself, here is a spirit stronger than my own, who will never take me at my own wild words; but will let these paroxysms of passion pass as a storm passes, without harm to any but to her who must always suffer from shame and remorse when they are over.

"Oh, keep your promise to me, even though, in my jealous fury, I absolved you from it, and drove you from my presence. It was not I who did it, for I love you, Gerald. It was the devil who controlled me then.

"Oh, Gerald! that devil has left me now. Let him not enter you. I thought I saw that devil in your eye, for the first time, when you left me last night with these fatal words: '*You have driven me away once too often. Good-by—forever!*'

"But this cannot, must not be so! Oh, Gerald, nothing but the demon could inspire you with the thought of a final parting with me! Oh, Gerald, do not let that demon get possession of you, for if he should obtain control over your organization, *he will goad you to such deeds of desperation, of fatality*, compared to which my acts, bad as they are, will seem but child's play. Come back to me, Gerald! Come back to me, or I die! I cannot say that I will never be jealous of you again. My love is a moss-rose full of thorns; but I will love you, and love you, to all eternity!"

As Gerald Fitzgerald read this reckless, impassioned out-pouring of Geraldine's soul, his face grew paler until it faded to the hue of ashes; his frame reeled until he leaned his elbow on the mantelpiece near which he stood. As he continued to read, his form drooped more and more, his head bowed lower and lower over the paper he held.

Meanwhile the messenger and the sexton gazed on. They felt no particular interest in the letter.

Dr. Goodwin and the two girls watched the reader anxiously. They knew well that the missive which was wringing his heart came from Geraldine and invited him to return to his allegiance. They only pitied Gertrude and wondered what Gerald would do. And the poor, unloved bride!

Gertrude, sitting near him, saw Fitzgerald's emotion, and knew that all this distress was caused by the letter he was reading, and that the letter must be a peace-

offering from Geraldine, come too late! With delicacy she turned her head away. She would not watch him in his present mood. Had she done right in giving herself to him? Would her gift bring him peace and happiness? She dared not dwell on that question now. She had become his wife, in compliance with his will—that will which was now and henceforth her law. Was she sorry for what she had done? No, and a thousand times no! for she loved without self-love, and such love never looks back with regret upon its offerings. As she turned her eyes from watching Fitzgerald's troubled countenance, all the innocent delight died out of her face, and left it pensive as of old.

Fitzgerald finished his letter, and laid it on the mantel-shelf beside him. He remained leaning on his elbow, lost in thought, and then, with an effort, aroused himself and said: "This letter requires an answer, Dr. Goodwin. I think you keep stationary here. Would you kindly allow me to write a few lines at your table?"

"Certainly, Colonel," replied the rector, as he produced pen, ink, and paper, and laid them on the top. Fitzgerald excused himself on the plea of necessity, sat down, and wrote:

"Old Red Sandstone Church, Tuesday afternoon.

"My Dear Cousin Geraldine: I have just received your letter. I cannot come to you, as you request me; nor can I believe, even if I had the power to obey your call, that it would be wise or well to do so.

"Experience has demonstrated that, strong as our attachment to each other has been, we cannot live in harmony together. No house would be large enough to contain you, your familiar demon, and myself. I have known this for some time: yet, again and again, when I have witnessed the power of that demon '*jealousy*' over you, I have allowed sober judgment to be conquered by passion, and have returned to you.

"And now, to place it forever beyond the power of passion so to overwhelm judgment as to ruin both your life and mine, I have this hour raised an impassable barrier between us. I have just united myself in marriage to Gertrude Haddon, to whom, I hope to make a faithful husband.

"I shall show this, and all future letters that may pass between you and me, to my young wife, but I hope that none may be written; your own good sense will advise you that, under these circumstances, all intercourse, whether personal or epistolary, should cease between us.

"And now, wishing you all the happiness your temperament will permit you to receive,

"I remain your affectionate cousin,

"GERALD FITZGERALD."

He finished his letter, looked up, as if he would have called his child-bride to him, and recollecting himself, and the respect due to her, he took up the letter, and went to her side. She raised her head, and he saw that all the gladness had died out of her pale little face, and he knew the cause. He placed the letter in her hand, saying in a low tone: "Before I send this letter off I wish you to read it, Gertrude. There must be no secrets between us, my child."

She looked gratefully up to his face, and then she dropped her eyes to the paper and read his farewell words to Geraldine. When she had finished reading she returned the letter to his hands and sighed.

"I will try to make you happy, sweet girl," he whispered, in response to her sigh.

"Oh! that I could only make you so," she breathed—her whole soul's devotion in her tone.

"You will be sure to do so, my dove," he answered, as he placed Geraldine's letter and his own in one envelope and superscribed it to Miss Fitzgerald.

"Take this to your young mistress at Greenwood and take *this* in consideration of your long ride," said Colonel Fitzgerald, as he placed the letter and a sum of money in the hands of the messenger.

"Thank y' Marse Colonel, werry much indeed, sar. Fus' fing dis mornin', Miss Gerline had me rousted out'n bed and sent off 'dout my breakfas' to carry dat letter to you, at de Summit, which I 'rived dere 'bout ten o'clock, and was tole how yer honour had done rid pos'-has'e to Wildeville. And I starve near to deaf arter my ride widout my breakfas', and didn't eben dare to stop to get any defreshments from Aunt Hetty, 'cause Miss Gerline had given me orders not to stop nowhere till I had

'livered of de letter inter your honour's own hands. When I got to Wildeville dey tole me you was at de Ole Red Sandstone Church, and had left orders at de Wildeville Hotel for de coach to folly you on here immediate," concluded the giant.

"The letter came in very good time. But you spoke of the carriage I ordered. Has it come, do you know?"

"Yes, Marse Colonel, it got here mos' soon as I did; fact is, it lef' Wildeville 'fore I did. It's at de door."

"Very well. You had better return to Greenwood, with my answer to your mistress's letter," said Colonel Fitzgerald. The giant bowed himself out. When he had gone, Gerald Fitzgerald turned to his bride, saying:

"Come, Gertrude, bid your friends good-bye. We must catch the five o'clock stage-coach from Wildeville."

"Will you take her away immediately?" asked Dr. Goodwin.

"Immediately. That is the law of etiquette, I believe, at weddings, when there are no cards and no reception," said Colonel Fitzgerald.

"And no breakfast, and no bride's cake, and no trosseau, and no presents, and no love, and no nothing!" added Patricia Fitzgerald, in a whisper to May Faire.

"Will you please to have Mrs. Fitzgerald's effects forwarded to Fuller's Hotel, Washington city, reverend sir," said Colonel Fitzgerald.

"You will remain in Washington for some time?" inquired Dr. Goodwin.

"I hardly know. Much will depend upon my little lady's wishes, and she has not had time to form any yet."

"Oh, Fitzgerald! be good to my child!" cried the rector.

"I shall be loyal to my wife," answered the bridegroom.

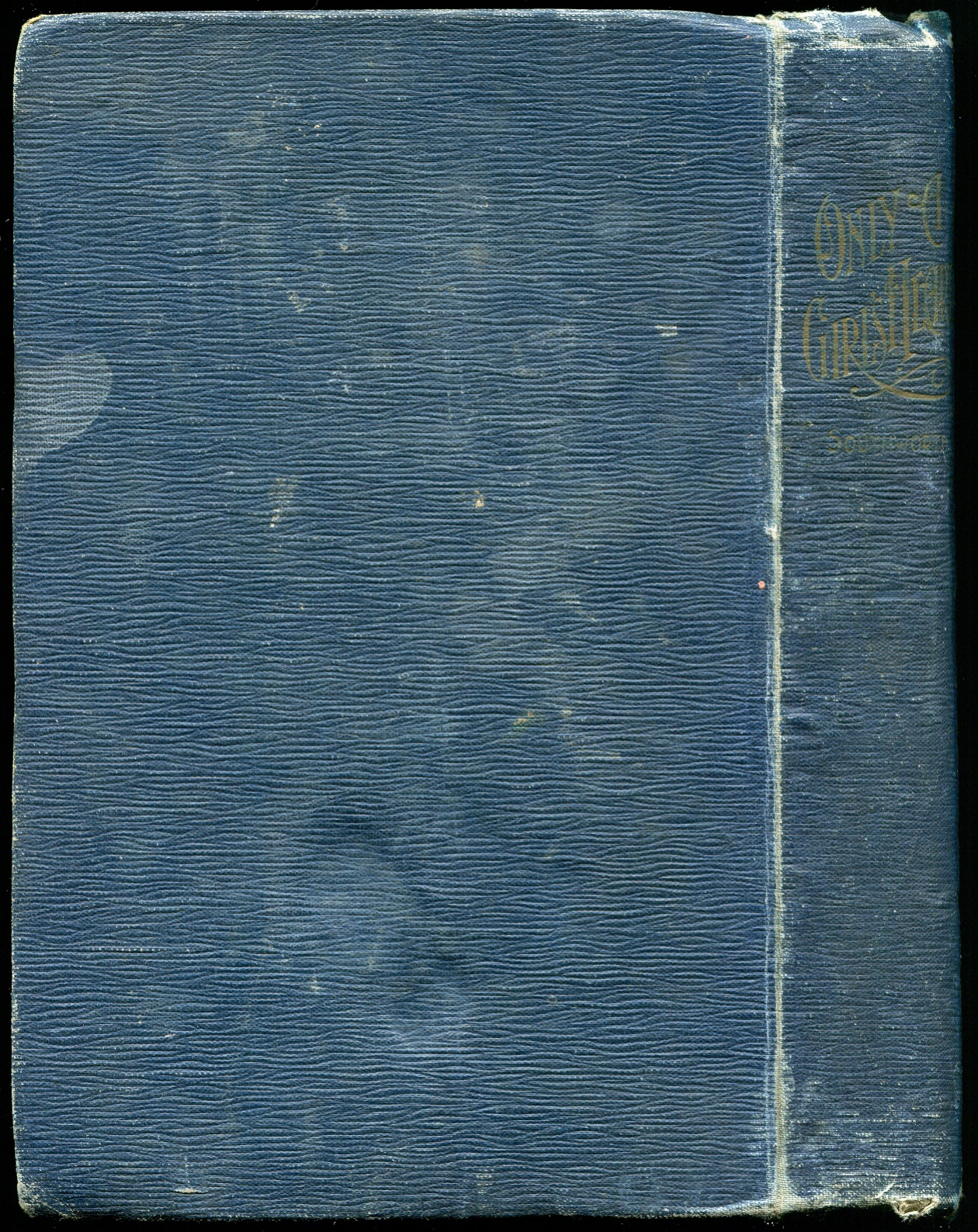
"Yes, I am sure you will. Heaven bless you, my dear Gertrude, and make your married life as happy as it deserves to be!" exclaimed Dr. Goodwin.

She pressed those venerable hands to her heart, and bade her old friend adieu. She kissed Patricia and May, and turned to her husband. Colonel Fitzgerald drew her arm within his own, and led her to the carriage which was waiting at the door. Gerald Fitzgerald put her into the carriage and placed himself by her side, and gave the signal to the coachman, who started his horses.

"'She has gone to sea in a sieve, she has!
In a sieve she had gone to sea,
In spite of all her friends could say,
On a stormy morn of a winter's day;
She has gone to sea in a sieve.'"

sang Pat Fitzgerald, gazing after the carriage. "Oh, yes, I know," she added; "you will tell me that this is a golden afternoon in glorious autumn, and that she has gone to the city in a coach. But 'she has gone to sea in a sieve,' for all that."

For the continuation of this Story,
"ONLY A GIRL'S HEART," *See*

"THE REJECTED BRIDE."

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